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SHATTER THE SKY

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Shatter The Sky

Denise Robins

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"I shall rise at morning,
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Grope in darkness,
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And tell unfailingly
Black from white.

"I shall use my brain
To earn my bread,
Snarl when hungry,
Smile well-fed,
I shall not die;

"I shall be dead."

J. SIMON

"Donde una porta puerta se cierra, otra se abre."

Don Quixote, I, 21.

CHAPTER ONE

I

KAREY walked to the piano and firmly removed the vase of tall chrysanthemums which had been placed there by Mrs. Mullins, the cook.

Every morning of her life Mrs. Mullins, with a firmness which equalled Karey's, replaced that vase upon the piano. Karey shook her head and smiled as she set the flowers on an oak chest in a corner of the drawing-room. She thought that the big bronze and red blooms, which were so lovely, amongst the autumn leaves, gazed at her a little reproachfully. She said:

"I'm sorry. You look very nice on the piano, but a piano is *not* the place for flowers, photographs, or ornaments."

She smiled as she opened the lid of the Blüthner boudoir-grand which had been her father's present to her on her seventeenth birthday, and sat down to play. It was a beautiful, mellow instrument which had meant much to her during these five years, and would go on meaning a great deal all her life.

Mrs. Mullins had just drawn the curtains and put a match to the fire. The wet October day was reaching a dismal close and it was cold in this big drawing room. Cold all through the house, Karey thought, and shivered as she sat down at her piano, rubbing her chilled fingers against each other.

She had been out all day, driving her father from one place to another on his rounds. He was the leading local doctor in Brentham, this Sussex village wherein Karey had been born and had lived all her life. Since Mrs. Marsden had died, three years ago, the doctor had been ageing rapidly. It was to save him undue fatigue that Karey acted as his chauffeuse. But it was a cold, tiresome job this time of the year. It meant hours of waiting for him while he visited each patient, and it was still worse in the winter.

But after this week there would be no more of it for Karey. No more of the monotonous, uninspiring life that she led in Brentham, where, until recently, she had really nothing except her music to stimulate her brain and satisfy her emotions. No more sharing the honours of cook-housekeeper with Mrs. Mullins; no more craving for a little excitement, for something which would be the real *élan* of existence.

In four days' time Karey was going to be married—to Noel,

The advent of Noel Farringham had altered the whole of life for Karey. He had been up at Oxford with a man named Peter Allen. The Allens lived at the Manor House in Brentham. At the end of July, in this year, Noel came down to the Manor House to spend a fortnight's holiday with his friend. Karey was a favourite with the Allens and soon met Noel. Inevitably they fell in love with each other almost at their first meeting. Their mutual interest synchronised miraculously.

Noel was making his way in the world as junior-partner in his father's firm. He was a chartered accountant. But his hobby in life was music. He composed songs and sang them. In Karey he found the perfect accompanist as well as the ideal woman. She, when she first heard his charming, sympathetic voice and played his songs, fell quite hopelessly in love and had remained in that state ever since.

Now they were acknowledged lovers. Dr. Marsden fully approved of the engagement. Noel was not rich, but he was in a position to keep a wife, and it seemed an ideal match from every point of view for Karey.

The only thing that shadowed her happiness was Karey's anxiety about her father. His health was not too good and he should really have retired long since, but he could not afford it.

Karey hated leaving him, although her anxiety was mitigated by the fact that the young partner—a promising surgeon—was coming to share this house when Karey left it. That knowledge was a great relief to her.

To-day being Saturday, Noel was coming down for the week-end. On Tuesday their marriage was to be solemnised in Brentham Church. Upstairs in her room there were two trunks packed with clothes which Karey had collected for her trousseau. And locked away in the spare room were all the wedding presents which had been coming in for the last few weeks and which had been so exciting to unwrap and examine.

Karey was conscious of profound happiness this afternoon—a happiness which seemed almost too great to last. It seemed to permeate her very being.

She sat at her piano, her slim white fingers drumming out one of Noel's favourite melodies which she hummed to herself. Glorious to think that by five o'clock he would be here. He was motoring down from Town and expected to arrive in time for tea. Heavenly to think that very soon he would come up behind the piano stool and put both arms around her, which he loved to

do, and press her against him. She would lean back her head and shut her eyes and feel his eager lips wander from her mouth to her throat.

Then he would sing to her. They would spend one of those enchanting hours of music together which seemed symbolic of their passionate love for each other.

While she sat here playing in the October dusk with only the leaping firelight to pierce the shadows, Karey could feel her lover's presence. She visualised his slim, graceful figure; the rather pale, boyish face with dark melancholy eyes which could look amazingly brilliant in his happy moments. His was the thoughtful, sensitive face of a dreamer. Noel was so much more the musician than the man of business which circumstances forced him to be.

The other day, when he and Karey had been discussing their marriage, Noel had said:

"I never thought it possible to meet a woman who would be so entirely one with me, Karey, sweet. When I was at Oxford I was attracted by the thought of women and yet something always held me back from them. But you—I loved you when I first saw you—and when you sat down at the Allens' piano and played, I looked at the back of your little fair head and knew that I was going to worship you. I do, with all my heart and soul."

Karey, held tight against his heart, and with an arm curved about his neck, had pressed that fair head of hers against his which was so much darker and whispered:

"Darling, darling Noel! It's been just as much a wonder and an amazement to me to have discovered you."

They had fully made up their minds that they were going to be the most ideal married couple the world had ever known.

In front of Karey were some loose sheets of manuscript . . . Noel's latest song. She had been practising it last night, but she knew and played it by heart now. Both melody and words were exquisitely plaintive. She longed to hear Noel's golden baritone singing it for her. Queer that she was so happy, and yet loved the sadness of the song. But love and pain were akin; inseparable.

She murmured the words:

"If you leave me?
I shall not die,
Or make grief a trumpet
To shatter the sky.

"I shall not ask
For anything more
But to walk according
To natural lore,
One foot behind
The other before."

The door opened so gently that the girl, playing at the piano, did not hear it. A man's tall figure appeared on the threshold. He stood there in silence a moment, watching and listening. He found an exquisite picture in Karey with the firelight revealing the pale cameo of her face—a lovely young face; clear-cut profile and tender curve of lips and throat. Her hair, such fair gold that it was almost silver, was looped over her ears and pinned in a little knot at the nape of her neck. She wore an olive-green velvet dress with little bands of soft fur at throat and wrists and an old necklace of twisted gold which Noel had given her.

The man in the shadows feasted his eyes a moment hungrily on the grace and beauty of her, but the sound of her voice, the melody of her song, gave him no pleasure. He was not a musical man. It was the physical beauty, the personality of Karey which attracted him. He felt almost murderously inclined when he thought of Noel Farringham, who had come here, a stranger, three months ago and swept her off her feet. It galled him to think that she was marrying Noel in four days' time and he, Ralph Chesney, who had been in love with her for over a year, must fade out of the picture. Ever since he had come to Brentham and bought this partnership with old Marsden he had wanted Karey.

She had been kind to him, but she had never reciprocated his passion. He hated her music—felt an irrational grievance against it, as though it were responsible for Karey's lack of love for him. She had told him, when he had first proposed to her, that she could never marry a man who did not appreciate music.

He felt, too, that Noel Farringham had an unfair advantage. Just because he sang and composed songs, he had rushed to victory with Karey. It maddened Chesney. He was a slow-moving, obstinate young man who could in no way be called impulsive. He disapproved of impulses, of "temperament" in other people. He strongly disapproved of the rapid way in which Noel had wooed and won Karey. He believed that Karey would regret hurrying into this marriage. The pair of them were both too artistic, in Chesney's opinion. There would be no balance, no poise,

no security, and he felt that he could have given Karey all three of these things. Artists and musicians needed support—stability.

Karey went on with her song.

"I shall rise at morning,
Sleep at night,
Grope in darkness,
See in light,
And tell unfailingly
Black from white.

"I shall use my brain
To earn my bread,
Snarl when hungry,
Smile well-fed,
I shall not die;

"I shall be dead."

The last, mournful note died away, and she sat staring before her and a queer shiver went through her. She thought: "Oh, Noel, my darling—yes. I'd be like that—dead if you died!" Then suddenly she sensed that somebody was in the room. She swung round on the music stool and saw her father's partner standing on the threshold.

"Hullo," he said, and came in, switching on the light as he did so.

Karey blinked. She had found the dusk and firelight soothing. The sudden brilliance of the electric light jarred on her. Dr. Chesney's entrance jarred a little too. He was always so thoroughly practical and solid; she, like her lover, was both poet and dreamer.

"Have you been listening to Noel's new song?" she asked him, getting up from the piano. She crossed to the fireplace and stood there, smiling at Ralph, who returned the smile half heartedly.

His love for Karey was not of the selfless kind, and he did not find it easy to step aside in favour of another man, even though he knew that it was for Karey's own happiness.

"Is that a new song of Farringham's?" he said. "Well, it seemed to me pretty funereal. I like something cheerful on the piano, something more rollicking."

Karey's eyes quivered with mirth and her eyes danced at him. They were grey-green eyes—more green than grey to-day because she was wearing that olive-green velvet dress.

"What a he-man you are, Ralph. I can just see you adoring things like 'The Roast-beef of Old England.'"

Dr. Chesney shrugged his shoulders and drew a pipe from his pocket.

"Well, I don't see the use of these mournful lyrics. There's enough sadness in the world. Why do people want to write tragic songs and tragic books, I'd like to know?"

Karey seated herself on her favourite pouf in front of the fire and clasped her hands about her knees. She looked a moment up at Chesney's square-cut face. A handsome face, on the whole. Women—most women whom Karey knew in Brentham, anyhow—thought Dr. Chesney most attractive and quite a "catch," since he was barely thirty and making headway in his profession. It was thought, locally, that he would not be long at Brentham. He was the sort to end in Harley Street.

Good looks alone had never had much effect upon Karey. It was the mind which interested her most. She was on friendly terms with her father's partner, but she did not much care for his mind. He was clever at his job. Outside that he lacked imagination. He was inclined to be too self-opinionated and dogmatic. No doubt some people might say he was a fine, strong character. But when Karey thought of Noel, who seemed so full of grace and tenderness, so swift to respond to a mood, so understanding of a woman and her needs, Ralph Chesney seemed utterly remote from her—outside her scheme of things. Noel would never hurt her. But Chesney, even when he was in love, would not hesitate to try to force his own opinions on a woman and deprecate hers.

"Of course, you aren't musical, Ralph," Karey said with her sweet-tempered smile. "But I assure you that some of the loveliest operas and songs that have ever been written have been sad. Sorrow is so often responsible for the creation of a masterpiece."

"Humph!" grunted Ralph and sat down and lit his pipe. He eyed Karey's fair, enchanting face and figure through a cloud of smoke. "Well, if you like it—it's all right."

"I must say I love the new song. It's called 'Answer.' Noel found the words in a magazine. They're by J. Simon. I can just understand a person feeling like that. If somebody you loved very much died, you'd carry on, but you wouldn't be alive yourself any more—you'd be dead."

"It sounds very romantic, but I'm afraid I look at things in a more prosaic way. I don't believe that people sorrow for others all their lives, my dear Karey. Widows are very quick to get married again, and widowers too, if it comes to that."

"What a horridly unsentimental person you are."

"Sorry I'm so horrid."

"You aren't, silly. But that practical side of you terrifies me. I'm so different."

"You're really very capable—look how well you run the house and that sort of thing."

Karey tilted back her fair head and laughed. The man, his moody, unsatisfied gaze still fixed on her, thought how lovely her throat was; long, slender, and white. She was a lovely thing. He was not at all in tune with her mentality, but physically she had a violent appeal for him. She was the only woman he had ever wanted to marry. He was a bachelor by nature rather than a born lover, and for most of the girls who angled for his favours he had little use. He treated them all with a maddening touch of superiority.

With Karey he had never been able to feel superior. There was something so inaccessible about her. Something which warned a man to be careful. He could not get over the humiliation of having been rejected by her. Neither would he ever see, as long as he lived, why that young ass of a musician should have appealed to her so vastly. Her whole face became vivid, rich, when she mentioned his name. She was obviously more than ordinarily in love. Chesney lacked imagination, but he would have given anything on earth to be in Noel Farringham's shoes.

"I may be able to run a house well," said Karey, "but I'm sure if I heard Noel singing a song, or the strains of 'Tristan and Isolde' coming from the gramophone, I'd leave the milk to burn in the saucepan and listen.

"Well, you'd soon get lean on that philosophy," was Chesney's dry reply.

Karey laughed again and looked at her wrist-watch.

"Nearly five. Noel's awfully late. Daddy ought to be in, too."

"I saw him at the surgery twenty minutes ago. He was called out."

"Had a busy day, Ralph?"

"There's always plenty doing in this district. It's a biggish practice. But I don't mind the work. I like it."

She nodded. Yes, Ralph Chesney was a wonderful worker and a most admirable partner. She would be glad when Daddy retired and left it all in Ralph's hands.

"Are you going to have a cup of tea with us?" she asked.

Chesney stood up. For a moment he did not answer. He was wondering whether he was really wanted. He lived in a small house adjoining the Marsdens', which was a rambling old Queen Anne place, right in the centre of Brentham High Street. It was

convenient for the two partners to be near at hand. He could come through his garden into the Marsdens' house. He frequently joined the Marsdens for meals and spent many of his evenings with them. Lately Ralph had stayed away, sulking over Karey's engagement, and now he was not sure he would remain to tea. He had hoped to find Karey by herself, but here was Farringham again, turning up at any minute.

"Do stay," said Karey in her friendly fashion. "Daddy will be in in a minute."

"Thanks, if I'm not in the way," said Ralph and sat down again.

"Of course you won't be in the way," said Karey.

It was not strictly true, but she was much too happy to resent intrusion from anybody. Noel was coming for the week-end and she would have plenty of opportunities to be alone with him. After Tuesday there could be no intruders. They would be in Italy, on their honeymoon. Noel knew Italy and loved it, and he was going to take Karey to the Lakes and afterwards to Florence and Rome. There they would have their fill of beauty, of music, of each other. She never thought about their impending honeymoon without a wild thrill which seemed to shake her whole body.

"I'll just go and see if Mrs. Mullins is ready with the tea," Karey said. "Make yourself at home, Ralph. I'll be back in a moment."

The telephone bell rang. Karey grimaced.

"Another call for you or Daddy, perhaps. Would you like to answer it, Ralph?"

"Right," said Ralph, and strolled into the next room, which was Dr. Marsden's study.

Karey told Mrs. Mullins to bring in tea and ran upstairs whistling. Noel would be here at any moment. They wouldn't wait for him. She paused outside the door of the spare room, opened it and looked round. A vase of chrysanthemums stood on the dressing-table. She had picked them for Noel this morning She blew a kiss at them.

"Darling Noel!" she whispered, and then closed the door again.

Ralph's voice called up to her stridently.

"Karey—Karey!"

She leaned over the banisters.

"What is it?"

"The call is for you."

"Oh, who is it, Ralph?"

"I don't know—I can't make head or tail of it, but it's some message or other about Noel, and they say they must speak to you."

"About Noel!" repeated Karey.

The colour rushed to her cheeks and her heart seemed to stand still for an instant. Why a message *about* Noel? But he ought to be here—or at least well on his way.

She tore down the stairs, her breath quickening, ran into the study, and took the telephone receiver out of Ralph Chesney's hand.

II

When Lucas Farringham, Noel's father, told Karey on the telephone that Noel's car had skidded into a lorry on the wet, greasy road on his way to Brentham, and that he had been killed instantly, the bottom was knocked clean out of her world.

For the first few minutes the shock and horror of the thing stunned her so that she could neither move nor speak. She stood there by the desk shaking from head to foot, every vestige of colour draining from her cheeks, listening dumbly to what old Farringham had to tell her.

Lucas Farringham was nearing seventy. Like Dr. Marsden, he was a widower with an only child. Noel had been the apple of his eye, and it was a broken man who gave Karey details of the accident which had robbed them both of the person they loved best on earth. There was nothing much to tell except that an urgent message from Redhill had taken him in hot haste to a hospital there. Noel had crashed just outside Redhill, and his body had been conveyed to the mortuary, where the father had identified him. It had taken the authorities some little time to discover a letter and a card bearing Noel's name and address and eventually get into touch with his next-of-kin. Once there, the old man had realised there was nothing more to do save to telephone to the girl whom his son was to have married next week.

"It's no use you seeing him now—better just remember the boy as you knew him, my dear," Farringham told Karey brokenly. "He'll be brought back home for the funeral, but I'll telephone to you again to-morrow morning. No—don't come up to Town to-night, my dear. Thank you—but I'd rather face it alone—just to-night."

Karey tried to say something. No words came. Her eyes were enormous. Her face had grown pinched and old in a few seconds. Ralph Chesney, standing beside her, knew from the look of her that she was hearing bad news, but he was not quite sure what had happened.

He put a hand on her arm.

"What is it, Karey? Can I do anything—speak for you?"

She shook her head. Her eyes stared blindly past him. Her breath coming in great gasps. At last she managed to speak.

"Luke"—she stammered Noel's pet name for his father which she, too, had used since their engagement—"Luke—it can't be true—it *mustn't* be true!"

"My poor child—I wish to God that it wasn't—for both our sakes. But it's true enough. I've seen him. He looked very peaceful, Karey. It was merciful, my dear. He might have been horribly maimed. But it was his head—they say he couldn't have suffered ——"

Karey put a hand to her throat.

"Oh, God!" she said under her breath. "Oh, my God——"

Then the receiver dropped out of her hand and she fell. Ralph Chesney caught her and laid her quickly on the couch which was close at hand. He picked up the receiver and said: "Hullo!" but there was no reply. Hurrying back to Karey, he knelt beside her and began to chafe her hands. She came back to consciousness almost at once, and to the agonising memory of what she had just been told. She sat up with a sharp cry:

"Noel!" Her eyes, bright with terror, stared round her father's familiar study without seeing a single object in it. The sweat stood out in beads on her forehead. "*Noel!*" She moaned the name again.

Chesney, forgetful of self for once, looked at her with real solicitude.

"My dear child—what is it—what's happened?"

"He's dead!" she gasped. "He's crashed in the car at Redhill. It was his head—his father says he must have died at once—oh, my God—*my God!*"

She hunched up her knees and bowed her head upon them. She tore at her hair with both hands and began to sob wildly.

Chesney stood up. For an instant he was too confused in his mind to think clearly. He was in love with Karey and he had disliked and been jealous of young Farringham. But thinking about it in cold blood he wouldn't have wished the poor chap to come to a sudden and violent end. Neither could he bear to see Karey like this—half demented. Poor child—little wonder—it was such a ghastly shock. And she was to have been married on Tuesday.

Then the professional instinct in Chesney took command. He went to a corner cupboard, found some brandy and poured some into a medicine glass. Putting an arm round Karey he tried to make her take the stimulant. Her body was shaken with terrible, convulsive weeping.

"Try to drink this, Karey. Try, please——" he said gently.

She did not seem to hear him. She went on crying, moaning her lover's name: "Noel—Noel—*Noel!*"

Dr. Marsden, unconscious of the tragedy shadowing his house, returned from work and walked into his study. A tall, thin man with stooping shoulders, grey hair, and tired, short-sighted eyes behind gold-rimmed spectacles. He was usually much too tired these days. But like Karey, always sweet-tempered —easy-going. Few people, including his young partner, realised his real state of exhaustion and a heart that had played tricks with him lately.

He entered the room briskly, rubbing his cold hands.

"Hullo, folks——"

Then he stopped.

He saw Karey huddled up on the couch, with Ralph Chesney kneeling beside her; a medicine glass in his hand.

"My dear!" Dr. Marsden exclaimed, and hurried up to the couch. "What's happened? Are you ill? Kay—Pettit."

Her father's voice and the sound of that particular endearment which he had given her during her babyhood penetrated into Karey's anguished consciousness. She turned to him a face so distorted with grief that he could scarcely bear to look upon it.

"Daddy—oh, Daddy!" she moaned.

"What is it?" he repeated.

She could not answer, only shook her head and flung herself into his arms. He held her close and she pressed her wet face against his shoulder, sobbing violently. He looked up at his partner.

"What's happened, Ralph?"

"It's Noel——" said Chesney in an awkward voice and felt in his pocket for his pipe. "An accident, I'm afraid."

"Accident—but how bad?"

"Dead," came from Karey in a suffocated voice. Her father could feel the shudders that went through the slim young body. "He's dead—*he's dead!*"

Dr. Marsden looked at his young partner again, his face blank.

"It can't be true."

"That's what I said!" came from Karey. "Oh, Daddy—that's what I said. It can't be true. *But it is!* Luke saw him—Luke saw him——"

"My darling!" Her father interrupted the frenzied young voice and passed a hand soothingly over her hot, wet forehead. "Hush—don't cry like that —there may be some mistake——"

"None!" she panted. "I tell you, Luke saw him. He died at once

—pitched on his head. Daddy, I want to die, too. I can't bear it. I can't—*I can't——!*"

Ralph Chesney turned and walked out of the room. He could not bear to hear her. Karey—who was always clear-eyed and smiling, and full of enthusiasm about life, music, things in general.

To do him justice, Ralph Chesney did not consider his own feelings in the matter just now. Neither did he feel one vestige of triumph because death had stepped in and prevented Noel Farringham from marrying Karey. Such thoughts might creep in later—but not now with the sound of Karey's agonised sobbing following him wherever he went.

Mrs. Mullins served tea in the drawing-room and rang a bell. Nobody noticed it. The tea and the hot scones got cold. Karey and her father were still together in the study, and Ralph walked aimlessly from one room to another. Finally, Dr. Marsden came into the drawing-room and joined his young partner. The old doctor's face had a grey tinge to it which Ralph Chesney noticed and did not like.

"Are you all right, Doc?" he asked, frowning.

"Yes, yes. Nothing wrong with me," came the inevitable reply. "But Karey—that poor child! Great heavens, what a disaster, Ralph."

"Frightful."

"I've got her up to her room—made her drink the brandy. Mrs. Mullins is going up with some tea. If she keeps on like this I'll give her some tablets, later. Ralph, it's a terrible thing for her. That boy—such a charming, brilliant fellow—and he adored her. They adored each other. Going to be married on Tuesday——"

Marsden broke off, sat down heavily, and put his head between his hands.

Ralph bit hard on the stem of his pipe and frowned into the fire. There was nothing to be said. Nothing constructive—so he kept silence. But he knew that the old doctor was taking it badly. His grief was for Karey. He had been fond of Karey's fiancé, but it was for Karey that he suffered. She had been everything to him since the death of the wife to whom he had been devoted. He had adored Karey from her babyhood; been proud of her beauty, her intelligence, her genius for music. And he was grateful for the devotion which she, in her turn, had always given him.

"This is enough to kill her, Ralph," at length he said with a deep sigh. "She was more than ordinarily fond of that boy."

"I know," said Ralph.

"And we can do nothing to help her. There isn't a thing that I can do, as much as I love her. She's got to fight it out by herself, my poor little Karey."

"It'll take time, of course," observed Ralph; "but she's young, and one day——"

"She may be young," interrupted Dr. Marsden; "but she's got an unusually intense nature. She was like that even as a child—never gave her affection easily, and once given, it was for good. Karey won't find it as easy as many girls to get over such a tragedy."

Ralph cleared his throat.

"It's a damnable thing to have happened."

Dr. Marsden set his teeth, took off his glasses, and wiped them vigorously.

"I tell you, Ralph, I loathe driving these days—these greasy roads are death-traps. It's been drizzling most of the afternoon—the roads get oil on 'em. All the week-end traffic and there you are! Poor, unfortunate lad—I remember, now, the tyres on that car of his were getting smooth. It's a funny thing but when he was last down here I told him to go carefully. What can we do for Karey, Ralph? What can we do?"

"Nothing," said Ralph shortly. "That's the worst of it."

He crossed to the piano and touched the sheets of manuscript which were propped against a book of songs.

Ironical—poor Karey was singing this thing just before the news came One of Noel's new compositions—and all on the subject of death!

Upstairs in her room Karey lay on her bed with her face hidden on her arms, and she, too, was remembering the irony of that song—the last song Noel would ever write—remembering how she had loved it and been happy despite its melancholy theme. And now it had a deeper significance.

Oh, this was too hard, too bitter to be endured. He was lying dead—he who had been so full of the joy of life and love, and who had been so young. Monstrously cruel. The world was full of people, old, decayed, finished people, who had lived their lives. Death was for them. Not for Noel. Not for a boy of twenty-five with his career in front of him, and she, whom he had loved, waiting to share with him all the beauty and rapture of life. They had been standing, both of them, on the threshold of complete contentment. Now and for ever that happiness must remain incomplete. The final ecstasy would never be known. The plans they had made could never materialise.

Bitter, intolerable grief. It fastened upon Karey's very soul, like a machine which slowly drained her of every feeling and left her numb; a prey to utter despair.

Her tears had dried. She was beyond crying. She could only lie there suffering, wishing that she were incapable of thinking, of remembering, of existing.

"Noel, Noel, my darling——" she moaned his name repeatedly. "Why can't I come to you? Why wasn't I with you in that car so that we could have gone together? Noel, I don't want to live any more if you aren't here. The whole of my life meant you. Noel—my darling, my dearest—you can't go away and leave me like this alone. You can't. It's too cruel!"

Mrs. Mullins, shocked beyond words at the tragedy which had befallen her young mistress, tiptoed into the room with a cup of tea. A nice cup of hot tea was, in Mrs. Mullin's estimation, the panacea for all ills, either mental or physical.

She set the cup on the table beside Karey.

"Drink it up, miss, now do. It will warm you. It's perishing cold in here."

She switched on the table lamp, but Karey cowered away from the light.

"No—put it out—please," she whispered.

Mrs. Mullins sighed and obeyed.

"You must have your fire lit, Miss Karey, dear. It's such a damp, nasty night."

She knelt down by the fireplace and turned on the gas. The little pop and explosion as the match was applied made Karey start violently. Her nerves were on edge. She clenched her hands and kept her eyes buried on her arm.

A damp, nasty night, Mrs. Mullins said. Well—what did she care? What did it matter to her whether it was day or night, whether the rain fell or the sun shone? At Redhill, in a hospital mortuary, Noel was lying dead. He would never feel the rain on his face again. For the last time he had driven that little car of his along the London-Brighton Road, speeding towards her. Day would follow day and night succeed night. But Noel would never come. So nothing could ever matter to her any more.

Mrs. Mullins returned to the bedside. The fire gleamed rosily now through the darkness. She peered down at the prostrate young figure, and caught a glimpse of the white suffering mask which was Karey's face.

"Drink your tea, poor lamb," she said, forgetting her position in a moment of maternal sympathy.

Karey shook her head.

"I just want to be—alone."

Mrs. Mullins tiptoed out of the room and closed the door. Karey left the tea untouched. She lay motionless in a kind of stupor, sick and exhausted after the first passionate flow of her grief.

She tried to do as Noel's father had bidden her; to remember Noel as she had last seen him. Gay, attractive, full of ardour, his dark, brilliant eyes smiling at her as he never smiled at any other woman; his inimitable voice singing her favourite songs. Last Sunday he had been here with her, but it was in London that she had last seen him. They had dined together last Tuesday and danced. They had both loved dancing. She had stayed with an aunt in South Kensington. He lived with his father in Notting Hill Gate.

In the taxi taking her back to her aunt, Noel had held her very close to him. He had said:

"This time next week we shan't need to say good-bye. We shall be married. Oh, my sweet——"

A shudder went through Karey's body and she kept her eyes tightly closed. What bitterness to remember this. But it was preferable to the haunting picture of his death. Her imagination was so vivid. She could see . . . the skid . . . the crash—then Noel lying there on the greasy road, with his injured head, his eyes staring blindly up at the sky, and everything blacked out for him—his hopes, his work, his music, his memory of her. Was it of her he had thought just before death drew the veil over his consciousness? Had he lived long enough after the accident to call her name, or had he been flung instantaneously into eternity into the life that was waiting for him Beyond?

But was there a Beyond? Karey had always believed in an afterlife. To-night she could believe in nothing. Her faith in God, Himself, was shaken. This thing that had happened was too monstrous, too shattering.

Again and again returned those details of his accident, until she felt that she was going mad.

"Noel, why wasn't I there with you—why couldn't I have held your hand—comforted you—done something for you -"

She moaned the words aloud, softly, her body writhing with anguish. When her father came up to look at her he found her sobbing again, heartbrokenly.

He held her in his arms and comforted her as best he could. When she talked wildly of ending her own life, he was stern with her for her own sake.

"That isn't worthy of you, Kay. I know it's hard on you, darling, but we've all had some tragedy to bear in life. I had mine when your mother died, Pettit—after thirty years of perfect happiness. My life seemed ended, too. But I had to carry on. You must carry on too——"

"You'd had your thirty years with Mother," Karey wept. "Noel and I only had three months' engagement—and not even one week of marriage. If I'd belonged to him -if I'd had a child of his—it might have been easier. But I've got nothing—nothing——"

"The rest of your life, my darling. You're young."

"I shall never forget Noel and never love anybody else."

Dr. Marsden sighed and stroked her hair.

"That may be, dear. But Noel would not like you to grieve like this. He always wanted you to be happy."

"I know," she whispered in any agony of grief. "I know that."

"Then try to face it, Pettit, and remember that you've still got your old father—if he counts."

"Of course you do, dearest!" Karey temporarily forgot her own appalling disaster and turned her thoughts to the doctor. In the firelight his face looked worn and weary. "Poor darling, Dàddy," she added.

They clung together in silence for a while. Then Dr. Marsden made her promise to drink some tea if he sent Mrs. Mullins up with a fresh cup. But she refused an opiate.

"No—I won't be a coward any more, if I can help. I'll just undress and slip into bed, and try to sleep."

"Good girl. If you feel that things become too bad during the night, call me and I'll give you something. By the way, Ralph is very distressed. He sent up all sort of messages to you."

"Please thank him," she whispered.

Later that night, when she was alone in bed, with a hot-water bottle at her chilled feet, she dozed a little, exhausted in body and mind. But even then the thought of her dead lover disturbed her half-conscious brain.

He seemed to be there, sitting on the bed beside her, holding both her hands in his. He was smiling gaily and not at all unhappy. He said:

"You mustn't cry, sweet. I shan't sing sad songs to you if I make you cry——"

He had made that very remark one afternoon when she had been moved to tears over a particularly stirring song.

She could feel his hands pressing hers tightly. He always had such cool, strong fingers. And she heard herself answering him:

"Sing to me again, Noel! I don't mind being sad."

He opened his lips, but no song came His face seemed to grow puzzled and anguished. He shook his head, pointed to his brow, and she saw a jagged cut on the left side and blood running down his cheek, blood which poured down on to her fingers, drenching them.

She woke up, screaming.

Dr. Marsden was out of bed, in a dressing gown and with her in two minutes. She clung to him, shuddering and weeping He insisted now on giving her a sedative.

It was not until many months later that she learned from Mr. Farrungham that her nightmare had had a psychic quality.

The left side of Noel's forehead had been terribly cut when he was flung on to the road on the afternoon of his accident, and it was that fatal wound which had been the cause of his death.

III

It seemed to Karey that the nightmare continued long after she was awake. The agony of the days and nights immediately following Noel's death stamped indelible marks upon her; changed her in a night. The girl who had felt that the whole of life, gorgeous and enthralling, stretched in front of her, became a woman who believed that life was ended.

The poem which Noel had set to music was justifying itself.

"I shall not die;
I shall be dead."

Bitter truth! She was to all intents and purposes alive, walking about, forcing herself to eat, to sleep, to speak. But she was like a somnambulist, unconscious that she moved. This was death in life.

After the first wild surrender to her grief she made very little outward show of it. She insisted upon coming downstairs to breakfast in the usual way and going about her customary duties, and Dr. Marsden let her do as she wanted. He knew that it would be much worse for her to stay upstairs in her bed where she would have leisure for thought and be tortured by it. Better for her to take her usual place with him in the car and drive him on his rounds; to come back to the house and cut the stalks of the flowers and arrange them, which had always been her job; or even help Mrs. Mullins with the house-work. Although the good woman protested —alarmed by Miss Karey's white, set young face and the grim and dogged way in which she went about the house.

Dr. Marsden watched his darling with anxiety. He, too, was cut to the heart every time he looked at Karey's face and realised the mental agony which was so fierce and alive behind that mask. Her very smile made him want to weep.

Ralph Chesney was wrong if he thought that Karey would forget easily just because she was so young. She was not the sort to forget. During the three months that she had cared for Noel and prepared for her marriage with him, she had woven him closely into the very web of her existence. So exquisite the pattern, so dear to her the weaving, it was impossible for her to destroy a single thread of it. She and Noel had been close to each other in his lifetime, and she could not, now that he was dead, separate herself from him.

It was, perhaps, fortunate for her that a chill stepped in and prevented her from attending Noel's funeral.

A head-cold, of a rather virulent type, started on the Sunday, and by Monday morning she was full of it, heavy-eyed and a little feverish. Dr. Marsden forbade her to even attempt to go up to Notting Hill Gate.

"I don't approve of women at funerals, and even if you were fit, my dear, I'd suggest that you didn't go," he told Karey gently when they discussed the affair. "Stay at home and nurse that cold, or you'll be getting pneumonia. I'll go up to the funeral and take your flowers for you."

Karey, sitting in front of the fire in her father's study, her hands folded about her knees, stared into the flames with blind eyes.

"All right—I don't particularly want to go," she said. Her voice was without expression. "It won't be my Noel they'll bury. Only the husk of him. The real Noel is still with me. I can feel it—feel him somewhere quite close to me, Daddy."

Dr. Marsden turned away and busied himself with some papers on his desk. His lips were twitching. Poor little Kay—if only he could have done something for her. Death was so irrevocable. One could do nothing in the face of it. Nothing in the world could give Karey back her lover.

"I ordered my flowers this morning," Karey went on in the same monotonous voice, "carnations. He adored those big red ones."

"Yes, darling."

"It's rather ghastly—that they should be burying him on the day when he and I—I mean—our wedding-day——"

She stammered and broke off.

"Try not to think of that, Pettit," said her father.

She drew a deep sigh which seemed to come from her very heart, and put a hand to her head.

"This seems to go on aching—it never stops."

"I'll give you something for it."

"No," said Karey, "I can't keep taking drugs."

He looked at her with anxious tenderness.

"Well, you don't want to let yourself get to breaking point. Better to give way. A sedative won't hurt you."

She made no answer, but she thought:

"Won't hurt me—no. But it can't really do any good. It's temporary respite—but I'll have to wake up and start remembering again. Oh, Noel—*Noel!*"

"Well, take care of yourself, Pettit," said Dr. Marsden. "You've got a rotten cold, and I don't want you to be ill."

She gave him one of the set little smiles which seemed to him more tragic than her tears.

"All right, Daddy. I'll be careful."

But that night—the night before they were to bury Noel—there was no sleep for her. The bitterness of her loss, coupled with her resentment against the cruelty of the blow which Fate had dealt Noel, descended upon her in full force.

Dr. Marsden heard her moving about at various hours of the night and in the early morning. Once he got up and went to her; found her sitting in front of the gas-fire in her bedroom looking through an album of snapshots. Photographs taken this summer—all of Noel. Noel in the garden, in white flannels, ready for tennis. Noel with the two Cairns up at the Allens' house. Noel laughing at her, or laughing at somebody else. Noel with Karey, their arms linked, their faces radiant.

The doctor shook his head at her. She looked so desperately tired and so small; pathetically slight and graceful in her pyjamas and green velvet dressing-gown.

She looked at him as he entered her room and said:

"You shouldn't have got up, Daddy darling. It's only that I can't sleep, but I'm quite—all right."

He touched the bent fair head. Her hair, loosened, fell to her shoulders and curled like a child's.

"Must you look at these——" He indicated the book of snapshots on her lap.

"It's all right, Daddy. I just felt I wanted to. But you shouldn't get up just because you hear me moving about. You've got your work to do—and a heavy day to-morrow——"

She put a handkerchief up to her face.

"This cold makes me feel awfully stuffy," she added, "and somehow it's worse when I'm in bed."

"As you like, my darling. But it's past twelve. I should hop back into bed, and sleep if you can—or else put this round you."

He threw her a woollen jumper which he saw on a chair.

Karey lifted the album up to him and pointed to a snap of Noel half-kneeling on the lawn with one of Peter Allen's Cairns in the circle of an arm. He was smiling—it was an excellent likeness of him. So very attractive Noel had been when he put back that dark, well-shaped head of his and laughed.

The old doctor, with a lump in his throat, handed the album back to Karey.

"Yes, I remember, Pettit."

She suddenly bowed her head on her folded arms and made a little sound that might have been a sob or a groan.

"I want to remember him like that, Daddy. But I can't help picturing him up there in Luke's house—shut away in that box. And so very soon they'll be putting him away in his grave. Daddy —*Daddy*."

Dr. Marsden picked her up in his arms and held her close. He wished that she would cry. But no tears came to relieve Karey's intolerable anguish this night which should have been the happiest and most thrilling in a woman's life. The night before her wedding.

Dry-eyed, shaking from head to foot, Karey clung to her father —clung until the acute pain seemed to pass again and she grew calmer. Then she made him go back to his room and leave her alone. Made him promise not to come to her if he heard her again and told him that she would do her best to sleep.

The early hours of the morning found her out of bed again. She went downstairs to the drawing-room and drew the curtains. The chill October dawn filtered through the windows. The lawn and the trees were shrouded in a thick white mist. The world looked desolate, and in Karey's overburdened heart there was a desolation which could not be described.

Her head felt heavy, like lead, and her eyes were burning. She stood at the window for a moment staring out at the melancholy dawn which grew lighter every moment. She thought:

"Tuesday—and Noel and I were going to be married at twelve o'clock this morning, and then we were going to Italy—to sunshine—to happiness."

She shivered and turned back into the room.

She looked at her piano. The vase of chrysanthemums stood upon it, and had stood there all day yesterday and the day before.

But Karey no longed troubled to move it. She told herself, this morning, that she would never open the lid of that piano again; never again touch those keys. Her beloved music had meant Noel to her, he had been the inspiration of her playing, just as she had inspired his songs, when they had met and loved one another.

Some of his music, manuscripts, lay there, just as she had left them on the night of the accident. She picked them up. For an instant her dull gaze took in the words written in his own small, familiar hand.

"I shall rise at morning,
Sleep at night,
Grope in darkness,
See in light. . . .

"Snarl when hungry,
Smile well-fed,
I shall not die;
I shall be dead."

She wondered what jesting fate had led him to find those verses and set them to music just before his death.

She took the music and shut it away in the drawer of a writing cabinet. She thought:

"I died with you, Noel. I'll never play again, because you're not here to sing. Darling, darling Noel—I'd give anything on earth to be with you now. Why can't they bury me to-day as well as you?"

It had been terrible for him to die, but for her without him, life was going to be more bitter than death.

And so the day of Noel's funeral dawned and had to be lived through, somehow. It was on this day that Ralph Chesney made, perhaps, a better impression upon Karey than he had ever done before.

Without Ralph, Karey did not really know how she would have survived those long, terrible hours of remembering. That all too vivid imagination of hers would work; would show her relentlessly what was going on up in the Farringham's house. She could follow it all: the whole ceremony; the train journey from London to Chalingford, that small village in Hertfordshire where Noel's mother lay buried and where he was to lie beside her.

She tried not to see that long oak box which held the beloved body; but only the flowers which covered it, and particularly the great wreath of red carnations which carried her own last message to Noel, which she knew would be lying close to him.

Chesney prevented her from thinking too much. He knew that unless care was taken, Karey would end by collapsing. He was worried by the pinched, ashen look of her face. So he attacked the problem in his own way—the prosaic way. He would never be anything but practical, which was what she most needed. Sentiment, sympathy in any shape or form would not have helped. She would only have crumpled under it.

After Dr. Marsden had gone to the funeral, Chesney did not suggest bed for Karey, although she was sneezing and coughing and racked with cold. He kept her on the go most of the day. He even allowed her to wrap herself in her leather coat with a cardigan under it and a béret over her head, and drive him on his rounds. He assured her that he had neuritis in his right arm and could not use it, which was an excellent lie, because Karey immediately offered to drive for him.

He took his meals with her and talked eloquently on every subject which he thought might interest her and take her mind off her tragedy. He gave her his instruments to clean. He was with her every minute unless actually with his patients. Without being aggressively cheerful, he was indisputably a tonic; Karey needed the moral support that he gave and allowed him to stay with her because she dared not be alone.

She had never known Ralph to be so kind, so solicitous. He said and did nothing which could begin to open the flood-gates of grief. During the actual hour of Noel's funeral he broke the rule of a lifetime and talked "shop" with Karey. For a solid hour he enlarged on various interesting cases in the neighbourhood, and so dragged her mind away from the unbearable picture of her lover being taken to his last resting-place.

Later, when they were sitting together by the drawing-room fire, waiting for Dr. Marsden to come home, Chesney smoked his pipe and talked to Karey, keeping a careful eye on her. She was still a bad colour and she looked exhausted. There were dark shadows under the grey-green eyes. She wore black to-day. She had told him that to-morrow she would wear colours again, because Noel had disapproved of mourning. But he noticed, when he lit a cigarette for her, that her fingers were not shaking as they had done earlier in the day. Her nerves were less strained. Obviously she would be better now that the actual funeral was over and done with.

The intensity of her love for Noel amazed him. He had never really thought any girl of Karey's age could care for a man quite so profoundly. He was sorry for her, but now that he had had more time to think over the affair he could not help considering his own

feelings a little. It was, after all, a natural relief to him to know that Karey was still free; and if it was much too early to even start hoping that there was still a chance for him, he was not wholly unconscious of this aspect.

She would forget in time—or at least, if she did not forget, she would cease to suffer so actively. She was not, by nature, morbid or abnormal in any way, and the natural thing for her was to find somebody who would, in time, take Noel's place. Despite the fact that Karey had turned him down twice, and that he was in no way a second Noel, musician or poet, Ralph was sufficiently conceited to believe he would stand as good a chance as any man, when the time came.

That time was a long way off, and the thing would need infinite patience—and perseverance. Ralph had any amount of both.

IV

Dr. Marsden came back soon after four. Karey's lips trembled a little when she greeted him. Her eyes asked all that she could not say. He answered the unspoken questions with an arm about her shoulder, his own face very tired and sad. Everything had gone off very well. The ceremony was very beautiful. A great many of Noel's relations and friends, for he had been a popular young man, were present.

Luccesi, the Italian who had trained Noel's voice after he left Oxford was there. A beautiful wreath had been sent by Nella Marda, a well-known soprano who had once honoured Noel by singing one of his songs.

Dr. Marsden told Karey what he thought would please her, but he left out the unhappiest details; said nothing of the collapse of old Lucas Farringham at his son's graveside. The old man had recovered when they had got away from the cemetery, and Dr. Marsden saw no use in harrowing Karey with the tale.

Karey had nothing to say except:

"Thank you, Daddy. Well—now it's over——"

Then with a long-drawn sigh she turned away. Her father left her, to answer a telephone call. She was alone again with Ralph Chesney, who stood by the fireplace, still smoking his pipe. He put it in his pocket, walked up to the slim young figure in the black velvet dress which accentuated her extreme pallor, and touched her arm.

"You've been on the go all day, Karey. What about bed now? Eh?"

She looked at him dully.

"Yes—perhaps—I don't mind."

"Shall I carry you up?"

That brought the ghost of a smile her her lips.

"I shouldn't, if I were you, Ralph. I'm not such a light weight as all that."

"Nonsense," said Ralph.

He squared his chest and without further ado picked her up as though she were a child and carried her up to her room. She protested weakly, but was strangely glad when she found herself lying on her bed with her head against a pillow. She had not slept properly for nights and the strain of keeping up to-day had been terrific. Ralph knelt in front of the fire, lit it, and then drew the curtains.

Karey unclosed her heavy eyes and looked up at him. How kind he had been all day. There was something rock-like and dependable about Ralph. He was always ready for a crisis, ever useful in an emergency.

Impulsively she held out her hand.

"Thanks so much—you've been such a brick."

His heart leaped. He had never seen her look at him with such kindliness, and he drank in her gratitude thirstily. But he had the sense to give her cold, white fingers the merest squeeze and then left her.

"Both your doctors are going to prescribe a sleeping draught to-night, my dear. Good night. See you in the morning."

"Yes," she whispered.

When she was alone two great tears came into her eyes and trickled slowly down her cheeks. She lay still and did not even trouble to wipe them away. The October night was stormy, and she could hear the rain beating against the window panes driven by a north-west wind.

Out there in the wind and the rain, Noel was lying under his flowers. No—not Noel—he was not there. She could not bear it if she had to visualise Noel—the Noel she had adored—lying buried in that wet, cold earth with the wind raging over him. It was just his shell that was there. His spirit was here, beside her now, trying to comfort her.

But not even that could stem the boundless tide of her grief.

This should have been her wedding night. What was she doing here alone in this familiar room in the old home? Why were her trunks unpacked? All those presents in the room above no longer had any significance. She had not written to half the people who had sent those things. And now she would have the condolences

to answer instead. Already they had come streaming in—dozens of kind, futile letters.

"I know this must be a terrible tragedy for you, but believe me, Time is a Great Healer . . ." etc., etc.

They said that sort of thing—kind relations and friends—trying to make her sorrow easier to bear. But nothing could make it easier. Nobody. She wanted Noel back. Wanted him until she felt that she was going mad. The tears flowed thicker and faster, scorching her cheeks and soaking the linen pillow-case. She whispered:

"Where are you, my darling? Where are you? Can you hear me—see me? Is there any Beyond? Shall I ever meet you again, or is it just all over—finished—wiped out? Noel, we love each other so much! Oh, *Noel*, come back, come back!"

Her body shook with a passion of weeping—the first tears she had shed for three long days. If he would only come just for a moment, to hold her close, caress her hair with those sensitive, musician's fingers of his, kiss her eyelids and whisper: "Karey—sweet—you mustn't cry."

Perhaps, then, she might sleep and forget with his arms holding her. But they would never hold her again, and to-night she could not even feel that his spirit was with her. He was gone—absolutely gone. She was most terribly alone.

Downstairs the two doctors talked about her. Her father said:

"She looks rotten, Ralph. It's a bad show, my boy."

"Give her time, Doc.," was Chesney's imperturbable answer.

"I hope so," said the elder man and sighed wearily. "I hope it will be all right."

Chesney put his pipe in his mouth. He had a vision of Karey's beautiful, sorrowful eyes shining at him and her grateful voice thanking him for what he had done. He gave a queer, half-smile.

"It will be all right, Doc.," he said—"in time."

In the kitchen Mrs. Mullins was talking to the local "char" who came in twice a week to help with the silver cleaning.

"Miss Karey looks just as though she was ready for the grave 'erself," Mrs. Mullins was saying over the inevitable cup of tea. "It fairly upset me to see 'er to-day. The poor young gentleman was buried this morning, you know. So 'andsome, 'e was, and so clever, too, and Miss Karey just doted on 'im. It's crool 'ard on 'er."

"That it is," agreed the "char."

"I 'eard 'er sobbin' just now as I came down from me room,'

said Mrs. Mullins. "Poor little dear. And she should 've been off on 'er 'oneymoon to-day."

"I never did—what a shime!"

"All the same, Mrs. Bentley, mark me," said Mrs. Mullins, stirring her tea and assuming a knowing expression, "life ain't ended for 'er yet by a long way. There's the master's partner. One can see 'e's mad on 'er. She fair gets the men, and no wonder with 'er pretty face and 'er nice ways. I never knew a sweeter young lady. The young doctor got rid of 'is house and was coming 'ere to live when Miss Karey married, and no doubt 'e'll 'ave to come just the same. Well, with those two livin' in the same 'ouse and 'er broken-'earted and 'im consolin'-like—you never know, do you?"

"No, you never know!" agreed Mrs. Bentley.

They drank their tea with relish and smiled, knowingly, at each other.

V

One cold wet morning early in November, Karey sat at the desk in the drawing-room, writing letters. She had been writing hard for the last hour and her fingers felt chill and cramped. She sighed and looked at the pile of correspondence in front of her. She had answered twenty letters already, but still they came; had been coming daily for the last three weeks since the day of Noel's tragic accident and death.

Each letter that she wrote thrust a new knife into Karey's heart and opened the old wounds afresh. She had recovered her self-possession and taken her courage in both hands. The grief had seemed unbearable at first, but she had realised that it must be borne. She had taken up the threads of life again and put a brave face on it, not only for her own sake, but for the sake of those with whom she lived. It was selfish to thrust her grief upon others.

Ralph Chesney was part of this household now. Having disposed of the lease of his own house and made all arrangements to live with Dr. Marsden, he had been in an awkward position when Noel died. He had offered to find another house, since Karey was to remain in hers. But Karey and her father had both asked him not to alter his plans. So here he was, living with them, and Karey felt that she owed it to Ralph, as well as to her father, not to be the cause of a depressing atmosphere in the house.

She found Ralph very changed these days. Quite gentle and thoughtful, anxious to try to amuse or interest her. The dogmatic, rather over-bearing young man whom she used to resent, seemed

to have vanished entirely. She appreciated his efforts to help her through the darkest passage of her life, and out of gratitude sprang a friendship between them which had never before existed.

It was, perhaps, a natural reaction that she should find the unsentimental and practical surgeon the one person to whom she could talk freely and whose conversation stimulated her.

Everybody was kind. She had spent a week-end with an aunt in Bournemouth; been showered with sympathy and affection. The Allens up at the Manor House showered her with invitations; Noel's friend, Peter, begged her to stay with him and his wife in Town. But the young couple had only been married six weeks, and Karey felt she could not bear to be with the happy married lovers just at the moment. It accentuated her own irrevocable loss. Other invitations came from many sources. But Karey wanted to see nobody, do nothing.

All these people were too kind and their sympathy broke down her defences. She had armoured herself and she did not want that armour pierced. There were so many vulnerable points. A chance word from someone who had known Noel well . . . a familiar connection . . . a stray reminiscence, and the wall of strength which she had been building around her grief would soon collapse.

She had even put away Noel's photograph because she dared not look at it. She locked away his music, too, and refused steadfastly to touch her piano. Mrs. Mullins could litter it with ornaments and flowers now, but Karey no longer cared. She could not tolerate music in any shape or form. It had meant part of her love for Noel, and it seemed to have died with him. Most of her had died with Noel, she thought. It was a strange, new Karey who moved and spoke and carried on.

She could not even bear to wear the wrist watch which was to have been Noel's wedding present to his bride. Old Luke had sent it to her with one or two other small personal belongings of Noel's which he thought would please her. She and Noel had chosen the little platinum and diamond watch together. But he had told her that she was not to wear it until he gave it to her after their wedding.

She had wept over it passionately when it arrived, and then locked it away in her jewel case. One day she would use it—later when she could look at it without feeling that her heart was being torn in two.

The present which she had bought for him—she had economised rigidly in order to buy it—a thin, beaten gold cigarette-case for evening wear—that, too, was locked away with her treasures.

Noel had not even seen it. Queer how the very sight and thought of these trifles should so agonise her.

Probably Ralph was the one man with whom she could find companionship, because he and his ideas were so unlike Noel's. He could say and do nothing to hurt her or make her remember.

She had spent last week-end with an old school friend, a Mrs. Donaldson, who was doing secretarial work in a newspaper office in London. Joan Donaldson lived in a small flat in the West End. Karey liked being with her. She was a charming, clever young woman, two years older than Karey, and she, too, had had a tragic affair. A year ago she had married the man of her choice, and they had spent the honeymoon in Switzerland. John Donaldson's passion was Alpine climbing. He had been teaching Joan to climb and they had had three thrilling weeks together. The very last day of their honeymoon marked a tragedy. John went out with a guide on an expedition in which Joan was not included, because her husband considered it too difficult for her. She had never imagined that there could be any real danger. But these things happen . . . one mistake is enough . . . and the guide's efforts to save Donaldson were unavailing. Joan found herself a widow and returned from her honeymoon—alone.

She had been one of the first people to come down to Brentham and see Karey after Noels' funeral. Karey felt that she was one of the few friends who could really understand her secret torment. Joan had been through her particular Gethsemane. But somehow, when her grief was so fresh, Karey could not quite understand the attitude of Joan, who had been widowed only a year, and was now contemplating a second marriage.

"I could never possibly marry anybody else!" Karey had told her friend when they discussed the affair.

Joan Donaldson had smiled a little sadly.

"I said that, Karey, when Johnny died. You know how I adored him——"

"Yes," said Karey. "And I know how I've envied you. When I lost Noel I remembered you, but I thought how lucky you were to have had those three weeks with him before he died. If only I'd had those three weeks in Italy which Noel and I planned . . . but I've had nothing! It seems so cruel that I should have lost him before we were married."

"Do you think if you'd been his wife it would have made things any easier?"

Karey answered:

"Yes—because there would have been so much to remember."

"Perhaps. I had my memories—those three unforgettable weeks, climbing with Johnny," said Joan Donaldson. "But it's pretty hard to lose somebody who is absolutely one with you—somebody you've grown so used to. For months after John died, the nights were like hell. I used to wake up and feel that he was beside me . . . then when I found he wasn't, I went nearly mad. The loneliness was unbearable."

"But you had your memories," Karey persisted. "And now——"

"And now I'm going to marry again, and you don't quite understand it," said Joan with her rather sad, wise smile.

"Perhaps I don't," said Karey awkwardly. "You've got your work in your office and——"

"Work isn't enough for any man or woman, Karey, dear."

"But if you've loved anybody, terribly, how can you replace them?"

"You can't. There could never be another John. You could never meet another Noel. If one did, of course one would go crazy. Just imagine how marvellous it would be to meet the replica of the man one adored. Those things don't happen, but one meets somebody else somebody quite different, who fills a little of the void and grows to mean more and more to you. One does unaccountable things because of loneliness—or of a natural wish to have a home of one's own—and children."

Karey brooded over this. Yes, she could understand a woman wanting a home and children. And yet she could not even begin to contemplate putting any man in Noel's place.

Joan Donaldson added:

"Naturally you can't quite sympathise with me at the moment. Your own tragedy is too close. And when it's a little farther away from you you'll see everything more in perspective. I shall never forget Johnny and I could never even compare him with Dick, the man I'm marrying. John is part of one life and Dick of another. You'll find you'll want another life one day, Karey, and the greater the happiness that you've known, the more do you miss it and need it again."

Karey often thought over that conversation with her friend. And it revived in her mind this morning as she wrote a letter to Joan which was to accompany a wedding present. She said:

"I hope you'll find real and lasting happiness, and that nothing will spoil it this time, dearest Joan. . . ."

But as she read the letter over, when she had finished it she shook her head. Difficult to understand how Joan could forget

John sufficiently to enable her to give herself to another man. She was glad that Joan seemed so happy. She had had a wretched, solitary year. But Karey wondered if she, even though she had never been Noel's wife, would ever allow another man to hold her in his arms. The idea seemed impossible, yet there was proof enough in the world that such things happened every day. Hadn't Ralph Chesney himself once remarked that he did not believe in people sorrowing a lifetime for anybody?

With her own grief still gnawing at her, Karey almost resented the truth—the fact that the dead *are* frequently replaced, if not forgotten.

She got up from her desk, walked to the window and looked out at a leaden sky—driving rain. The wide village street was deserted, gloomy. A big chestnut treet, immediately opposite her window, was stark and stripped of its leaves. The bare branches creaked and groaned in the wind.

Winter was here. In Karey's heart perpetual winter seemed to have settled. Yet the Spring must come again. Life and birth, following death and decay. That was Nature's scheme of things. Karey's eyes, which had grown large and haunted in a face much too thin and white, stared blindly at the wintry scene in front of her. She thought:

"Noel, my darling, I shall never forget you—no matter what people say. Nobody could ever take your place."

Joan had said that the man whom she was marrying next week was not replacing John. It was just another life which was beginning for her. One could lead several little lives in one—each separate from the other.

Karey suddenly pressed both hands to her eyes.

"I don't want to change—I don't want my memory of Noel ever to fade or my love for him to grow less—no matter what I suffer," she whispered to herself. "I would hate myself if I changed."

Dr. Chesney's two-seater Morris drew up outside the Marsdens' house. Karey watched him emerge from the car with his case, and realised that it must be close on lunch-time.

She hurried to the fire and poked the slack coal into a blaze. Ralph came into the room and found her kneeling there. She smiled up at him.

"Finished work?"

"For the moment."

He looked pinched with the cold, and she moved aside and said: "Come and get warm—it's so wretchedly wet and chilly."

Ralph spread his hands out to the blaze.

"I don't mind the cold," he said cheerfully.

"I hate it," she said, and pulled her cardigan closer about her.

He glanced at her and noticed, not for the first time, how thin she had grown. She had lost all her lovely curves, and that pink, glowing colour which had made her so beautiful a short time ago. There was a hollow in her throat. Her shoulder-blades stuck out, and her cheek-bones were a little too prominent. She generally had a smile and a word for him nowadays, and he could not help feeling that Noel Farringham's death had opened a road to him which had before been firmly closed. But he wished that she looked fitter and that the grey-green eyes with their dark, sweeping lashes were not so abnormally large and bright.

"What have you been doing?" he asked her.

"Getting through my correspondence."

Chesney threw himself into a chair and pulled out his pipe.

"Humph," he said.

He knew what those letters were about. He wished heartily that people would stop writing and sympathising with Karey, and that she would have more chance to wipe the tragedy off the slate. His jealousy of Noel Farringham was as keen now, after his death, as it had been when he was alive. He begrudged every memory that Karey had of Noel; every tear she had shed for him, and every thought that she turned to him now.

"Where's Daddy?" asked Karey.

"In the surgery. He's just coming over to lunch."

Karey's delicate, level brows drew together in a frown.

"Ralph, don't you think Daddy's doing too much?"

"I do I try to take more off his shoulders, but he won't let me."

"I know. You're awfully good, Ralph."

Chesney's fair, square face flushed a little self-consciously. His heart-beats quickened at her praise. He wondered if she realised how maddeningly attractive she was when she looked at him softly, kindly like that. He gazed down at her left hand and wished, gloomily, that she would not go on wearing her engagement ring. She was never without that topaz set in marquisites which Noel had given her. He would have liked to take it off that white, delicate finger and put it away; hidden it with everything else that had bound her to Farringham.

"The Doc. isn't very good at allowing anyone else to do his job," said Ralph.

'But he hasn't looked at all well lately and it worries me."

"He'll be all right," said Chesney.

"You're such an optimist, Ralph—I don't really know what I'd do without you. You always cheer me up."

The man's colour deepened. He pressed the tobacco into the bowl of his pipe with a strong, blunt finger. His were the typical, powerful surgeon's hands.

"I do what I can, Karey," he said.

She sighed and looked into the fire.

"You do a lot. But I hope Daddy will be all right. I think, myself, he's a bad colour."

Chesney said nothing. During this last fortnight he had become very aware of the old doctor's failing health and not a little worried about it, but he did not convey his anxiety to Karey.

"We must try to get him to go away for a holiday," he said cheerfully. "Why don't you two go abroad together?"

Karey gave a wistful smile.

"It would be nice, but we can't afford it, Ralph."

"Money's a curse. One never has it at the right time. I'm coming into a bit one day, and it'll probably be when I'm an old josser not able to enjoy it. I'd like to have it now when I'm young. I want to specialise in nose, ears and throat, as you know, and I can't afford to do it on my present income."

Karey smiled at him.

"I didn't know you were an heir, Ralph."

"Not a very important one. But I daresay I'll have fifteen hundred a year when my aunt, Ellen Chesney, dies. However, I've no wish for the old lady to perish. She's barely seventy."

"These Victorian ladies live to a mighty old age," said Karey. "They're a fitter generation than the present one, in my opinion."

And at the back of her mind leapt the thought:

"Why should some people live to seventy and my Noel be killed when he was twenty-five!"

"The present generation's not too bad," began Ralph. Then he stopped. The telephone was ringing. He left Karey and went into the study to answer it.

When Ralph came back to Karey his face was white and strained. Karey looked at him perplexedly.

"Is anything wrong, Ralph?"

For the moment he did not answer. For the second time within a month he must be the bearer of ill-tidings to Karey; and this time he hardly knew how to face her. She had had so much to bear, already, poor child.

He took her hand and held it firmly.

"Karey, dear, you've been such a little brick lately—I hate to

have to tell you that you've got more to face—but I'm afraid I can't keep it from you, much as I'd like to."

Her heart seemed to turn over inside her.

"Oh, Ralph—not Daddy!"

"I'm afraid it is, my dear. This is as much of a shock to me as it is to you. I wasn't expecting it quite so sudden——"

"Tell me quickly," she interrupted. Her voice was rough but curiously calm. "Don't spare me. I think I can bear almost anything—now."

He went on holding her hand and her fingers responded convulsively to the pressure.

"Your father had 'a heart,' my dear. It's been dicky for some time, only he wouldn't do anything about it. He wouldn't knock off work. I left him in the surgery just now, but he must have gone out again. They 'phoned from Mr. Atkinson, the chemist's. He went in there to get something, and Atkinson said he just collapsed and was gone before they could do anything."

Karey put a hand to her forehead. She felt sick, but she was still unnaturally calm. Her cup of bitterness was overflowing. It could hold no more. Life was dealing her another blow, but it was just as though a great hammer knocked upon a place so numb already that the pain was mercifully dulled.

"You mean Daddy's dead?"

"His heart failed, yes, my dear. I'm going over to Atkinson's now."

"I'll come with you."

"Don't," said Chesney.

Karey, very white, looked up at him with her enormous eyes. Her face was puckered like a child's. Then suddenly the drawing-room seemed to revolve around her and she cried out:

"Ralph—don't leave me."

He caught her quickly, and she went limp in his arms. He saw that she had fainted. She was not in a fit condition to stand this shock after the strain of the last three weeks. For a moment he held her close to him. Her fair, shining hair, loosened from its pins, drifted against his cheek. He half closed his eyes and bent and kissed the top of her head, then laid her down on the sofa and stood an instant with a professional finger on her pulse. His heart was pounding and a curious excitement assailed him. He was thinking:

"You needn't worry. I won't leave you—ever. You can be sure of that, my dear."

He watched her for a moment, exalting. Death held no terrors

for him. He had seen it in too many shapes and forms, and the loss of old Marsden did not affect him personally. He had respected his partner, but nothing more. He had a friendly manner, but the nature of the man was cold; even antagonistic to the world in general. When he set his heart on a thing he was prepared to walk over anything or over anybody to get it.

Dr. Marsden's sudden death was of importance to him, Ralph Chesney, only because it meant, first of all, that he would be senior in this practice, and last but not least, that Karey would be absolutely alone. He believed that in this way Fate was going to lead her straight into his arms.

CHAPTER TWO

I

Six months later Karey Marsden was married to Dr. Ralph Chesney, by Special Licence, at a register office in London. They left Tilbury the following morning for Gibraltar, whence they were motoring to the South of Spain for their honeymoon.

Many and varied were the extenuating circumstances which led Karey to do in the Spring of the year what she would have deemed utterly impossible the previous Autumn. And, possibly, nobody was more astonished than herself when she walked out of that register office with Ralph and found herself tied to him for a lifetime.

Time had proved the truth of all the things which those, older and wiser than herself, had tried to tell her, and at which she had shaken her head. Joan had been so right—Joan, who was now Mrs. Richard Forbes and was living happily in a country house outside Liverpool. Joan, who had once sworn that life had ended when her first husband had been killed in that Alpine disaster. Joan, who had always shuddered at the thought of living in the North Country! Joan was doing a lot of things which she said she would never do; and it had been she, alone of all Karey's friends, who had dared to assure her that Noel Farringham's death had not by any means brought Karey's life to a full stop.

Karey knelt by a cabin trunk in a white and gold state cabin on an upper deck of the P. & O. liner, and found leisure for the first time for weeks to collect her thoughts and consider what lay before her in the future.

She seemed to have had little or no time at all for thinking lately —one event had so quickly followed another. She was feeling a little dazed after the rush of the last fortnight. And now, with a cigarette between her lips, she put away a few of the charming things belonging to her trousseau, and asked herself how on earth it had all happened.

Immediately after her father's sudden death due to *angina pectoris*, she had been ill · too ill to care what went on around her. Broken-hearted by the double loss of lover and father, and quite incapable of anticipating any kind of future for herself.

Her collapse had been followed by weeks of *malaise*, both mental and physical. She stayed in bed part of the time without protesting. She was in that state where nothing mattered any more. She lived in the shadows, and there was no relief from the darkness, the torment, except when she was drugged to sleep. Sleep was necessary, but the dope left her in a deeper state of depression than before.

During those black weeks, Ralph Chesney had played a central and important part. She had been made to feel that without his unswerving attention, his moral support, his tireless care of her she might easily have died. The two people she loved best on earth had gone and she wanted to follow. But Ralph drew her back by the very force and impetus of his own dogged determination. He wanted her and he was not going to let her slip from him, although she asked pitifully to be allowed to go. She was so tired of the struggle without Noel. Wherever Noel had gone she wanted to follow him.

It was Ralph who made her hang on and come back slowly and painfully to concrete existence and leave the haunting shadows behind her. With the aid of a clever nurse and his own medical knowledge he managed to cure her body and make it strong again. And then he literally forced his own virile personality upon her until she became aware of his needs, as well as her own. He loved her. He had loved her patiently for a year and a half, and she was the only woman, he told her, whom he could ever care for or whom he would marry.

He could not cure her mind, neither could he even soften the edge of her grief for her lover. Nothing could do that except time. But he could and did impress his own unflagging devotion upon her And in this he was helped by others. More than one relative and friend came to Karey's bedside and told her how wonderful Ralph had been and what a lot she owed to him.

She realised the fact and was grateful. She had been grateful for

his help when Noel died. Now she found herself depending upon him for everything. He took all the burden of business worries from her shoulders. There was nobody else to do it. Lucas Farringham, who might have been of some assistance, was so broken up by his son's death that he was ordered a sea voyage and a complete rest. He had gone out to Canada to visit a sister who had a ranch there, and was still away, so he had been no help or comfort to Karey.

When she was up and about again she found that her father's estate was all settled, and that Ralph had handled her affairs with wisdom and precision. And later, when she went down to Bournemouth to spend a sad and lonely Christmas with her aunt, it was Ralph who motored down, when he could, to relieve the monotony and take her out; amuse her as best he could.

Inevitably when the Spring of that next year came round, Karey felt that she owed a debt to Ralph which she could never repay. And he had asked for nothing except that she should get well and be happy again, because he could not bear her to be otherwise. He had been wonderful, and if he had taken possession of her despite herself, she seemed not to notice it, so subtly had he manœuvred his way to conquest.

The final victory came for Ralph when Karey discovered that she must find work because her father had left her barely enough to live on comfortably. She could not, of course, continue to share the old home with a bachelor. Just about that time, the old aunt to whom Chesney was heir, passed away in her sleep and left him the fifteen hundred a year which he had been expecting. Another spoke in the wheel for Ralph.

At the end of March, for the third time, he asked Karey to marry him.

"I have something to offer you now, and even if you don't love me—if you aren't in love in the way that I am—I want you to marry me," he had said. "I'll be good to you, my dear, and I'll make you as happy as I possibly can."

She had answered:

"I don't really want to get married, Ralph, and I can't ask you to take me, knowing that I'm not in love with you. It wouldn't be fair."

"I'll risk it," he had said. "You may like me better once we're married."

With tears in her eyes she had told him that she liked him very much already and that he had been unbelievably good to her. But

she still felt that she belonged to her dead lover and that she could not marry anybody else.

He argued with her strenuously. Not only had he pleaded his own side—his long devotion—his need of her—but he pointed out that it was morbid and wrong for her to contemplate living and dying without ever having had a husband and children. Noel, he argued, would have been the last person on earth to approve.

Karey remained in a state of indecision for a week or so. She knew that Ralph was right; that Noel *would* have been the last to want her to dedicate her life to his memory. The acute agony of losing him had passed, but she still missed him intolerably. On the other hand life was a grey, solitary thing at present, and there seemed nothing in the future if she turned Ralph down. Added to which she felt that she did owe Ralph a lot. If she could make him happy by marrying him, why not do it? She was in a negative state of mind and the general condition of things tipped the scales in Ralph's favour. She found herself engaged to him almost before she realised what she was doing.

She had one moment of awful fear that she was taking the wrong step; that was on the night before her wedding to Ralph. She spent it in London, staying at an hotel with the aunt who had come up from Bournemouth to chaperon her for the occasion. Ralph had taken her out to dine and dance at the Berkeley. He danced badly because he was an unmusical man and rhythm meant nothing to him. He stepped twice on her foot, leaving two marks on the green satin slipper. Then he cheerfully mopped his forehead and suggested that they should sit out.

While she sat there, smoking with him, listening to his dry, rather satirical comments on the men who danced too well and were what he called "lounge lizards," she looked at him and thought:

"Tomorrow I shall be his wife. We've nothing, really, in common. My God—what am I doing? Am I going to make a mess of things by marrying him?"

She looked at his square, ruddy face, his thick fair hair, shrewd blue eyes and big muscular body. A handsome man—a distinguished one. A man with two thousand a year at the back of him and a profession in which he meant to succeed. He had sold the little practice at Brentham and moved to a room in Queen Anne Street. He was going to achieve a big ambition and specialise in diseases of the throat, nose, and ears. He would make a success—of that she was sure. Ralph's determination would lead him anywhere. And they would be very comfortable in the pleasant flat

which they had decided upon, not far from his consulting room, where they would settle down when they came back from their honeymoon.

She ought to consider herself extremely fortunate to be marrying him to-morrow. Most women—many she knew—envied her. But to-night she found herself comparing him with Noel. She remembered how beautifully Noel had danced. Perhaps Ralph would have called *him* a lounge lizard; because he had been of slight, graceful build and had moved so perfectly to the music.

For an instant she was tempted to hand Ralph back his ring and tell him that she could not possibly marry him. Then she pictured his consternation. He adored her—so far as it was in Ralph Chesney to adore anybody—and for the last six months he had served her faithfully and well. No—she could not turn him down now, at the eleventh hour. She must stop thinking of Noel. In that thought lay madness. She must do what Joan had done; close the door on one life, lock it and lose the key and open the door to another.

After all, she was very fond of Ralph and he seemed to think that she might grow to love him in a more passionate sense once she was his wife. She was doubtful, but she would give it a chance. She owed it to him. And she had been really very happy since their engagement. She had prepared only a very small trousseau for her marriage to Noel. Ralph liked to see a woman well-dressed, and she had spent some of the money her father had left her, buying the clothes which would befit her in her new position. Every day had seemed a rush until the wedding-day. And this time, no tragedy. Everything had gone off well, without a hitch.

Then had come another moment when she had been stricken with fear of the future and with remorse because of the past. Last night—when she lay in her husband's arms and realised how irrevocable a step she had taken.

She belonged to Ralph utterly now. She had been generous in the giving, because hers was a generous and grateful nature. Her slightest smile or touch seemed capable of lighting fires in him before which her own coldness must melt a little bit. She was touched by his passion and, although she could not wholly respond to it, she allowed no revulsion of feeling to spoil his happiness, his triumph on their bridal night.

But long after he slept she lay awake and brooded in the darkness over things as they were, and as they might have been. Just for a while she was racked with the old torment; the old hopeless longing for the lover who lay dead in a little churchyard in Chal-

ingford. With that longing came a feeling almost of shame. She had once vowed that she could never belong to anybody but Noel. How was it possible that she had broken faith like this? Last Autumn she had been preparing for her marriage with Noel, and now this Spring she lay in another man's arms.

She looked at the fair, ruffled head of the man beside her, and remembered with all the old deep grief that darker, smoother one. One of Ralph's long, muscular arms lay across her slight body. The blunt surgeon's fingers held a curve of her arm, unconsciously possessive in his sleep. She thought of the slim sensitive fingers of the man who had died; of his different personality, so utterly different from Ralph's, and of how different everything would have been had *that* marriage taken place instead of this

A sensation, almost of panic, seized her. She had felt the palms of her hands grow wet and her throat become hot and dry. With hot, dry eyes she had stared blindly through the darkness, remembering, regretting, suffering. But the moment of reaction had passed, and with it the panic and the shame.

She had not broken faith. She had not forgotten. How was it possible to forget that first dear lover who had been so much one with her, and who had endeared himself to her in a way which Ralph could neither understand nor, himself, achieve? Part of her lay buried with Noel. Part of her would go on hungering, always. But the other part belonged to Ralph. It was her bounden duty not to look back in this morbid way, and above all, never to draw comparisons.

The tears began to rain down her face. Ralph, stirring in his sleep, put out a hand, touched her cheek and found it wet. At once he was awake and full of dismay.

"What is it, darling? You aren't unhappy? You're not sorry you married me?" he asked.

She pressed her face against his shoulder and whispered:

"No, no—of course I'm not—I'm just being silly. Ralph—be patient with me—go on loving me—go on being kind."

He showered her with kisses, with assurances of his love. But although no explanation was asked or given, Ralph Chesney knew the reason of her tears, and he hated the very memory of Noel Farringham. A less vain, self-opinionated man might have felt more sympathy, finer understanding. Ralph understood in a fashion, but he was too bitterly jealous to sympathise. Even then, with Karey lying against his heart, he registered a vow to cut out the memory of Noel, to be both first and last with Karey. Nothing

less would satisfy him. He was not going to be satisfied with being second best with the woman he had loved and married.

The following morning, Karey was more normal and, on the whole, quite content with life. It is not human nature for a girl so young, so responsive to life, to remain in a state of morbid retrospection.

The sun was shining, and the sea looked blue and calm, and it was impossible for her not to feel a little excited when she first stepped on board the ship with Ralph, and realised that her honeymoon had begun.

She had chosen Spain because it would be something quite new to her. She had been at school in France, and Italy was a closed book; the Italy to which she had been going with Noel. Friends had told her of a wonderful spot near Malaga—a villa in Torremolinos with a garden built in terraces down to the sea. In spring all the flowers were out in Spain and the bathing was perfect, so they had booked rooms for a month.

Ralph had worked hard until the day he disposed of his practice and set up his plate in Queen Anne Street. He felt that he deserved a holiday, and that it would be a good thing for Karey to get brown and fit in the sun after the long, trying winter.

II

Karey had never been on a big liner before. There seemed almost a breath of the East in the air already, when, at Tilbury Docks, the picturesque Goanese in their coloured tunics and turbans came running on bare brown feet to take the luggage.

Now she was here in her cabin, putting things straight while Ralph took a turn on the deck with the pipe. That pipe was part of Ralph's make-up. It meant to him what Mrs. Mullins's cup of tea had been to her, Karey told herself with a smile. Poor Mrs. Mullins! She had wept when the *ménage* at Brentham broke up. And although Karey had wanted to take her to London, Ralph had coaxed her out of it. She would need a smarter type of maid in town, in their flat, he had said. The old life at Brentham seemed finished, indeed, and this was another existence.

Karey threw a pair of black silk pyjamas on the bed nearest the porthole. She was going to "bag" that bed before Ralph had a chance. She glanced at the other bed and smiled, but her heart beat no faster. Quite calmly she unpacked for Ralph, as though they had been married for a long time. The unfamiliar hair-brushes, pyjamas, dressing-gown, shaving outfit, and the clothes which he

would need on board, meant nothing in particular. They were all just part of this new life which she was sharing with him.

She ought, of course, to be in a state of wild ecstasy. Her cheeks should be burning at the very memory of last night. But she was calm and cool and untroubled. She accepted everything naturally. How strange! It did not seem to her that she would ever burn and tremble for love's sake again. That part of her was buried with Noel and she did not believe that it could ever resurrect.

When the cabin was tidy, she stood for a moment at the porthole and looked out. The liner was moving, gliding slowly out of harbour towards the lock gates. With interest Karey watched the great docks, the cranes, the mass of machinery, a motley crew of men, black skinned and white, running along beside the boat with ropes in their hands; and there were one or two small parties seeing off their relatives or friends. They, too, were running with the boat, waving handkerchiefs. Karey turned her face from them. She could never bear good-byes and this liner was bound for Australia. Doubtless there were a few aching hearts being left behind, as well as breaking ones which must travel all these thousands of miles across the world.

As the great dock gates opened, and two mighty arms swung upwards to allow the liner to pass through, Ralph Chesney walked into the cabin.

"Hullo, darling. Aren't you coming up on deck? It's interesting watching everything. Hungry? Lunch will be going in about half an hour."

She turned to him. He looked fit and happy and satisfied with life. She could not help wishing that she felt as he did. But she gave him a smile.

"I am rather hungry. We'll go up now, shall we?"

He regarded her with satisfaction. She was altogether charming in the blue and white tweed suit which was her "going-away dress"; a little cap of the same tweed set jauntily on the side of the fair, shining head. She looked fresh and beautiful, and there was more colour in her cheeks, this morning, than he had seen there for a long time. He was satisfied that Karey, now that she was his wife, would go forward and look back no more.

He picked up the luxurious broadtail coat which lay across her bed and held it open for her. It had been his wedding present to Karey. He liked to see her wearing it. The soft fawn fox collar made an attractive frame for the fair young head.

"Put this on, darling, it will be cold on deck in spite of the sun."

"I shan't be cold, Ralph."

"I should put it on if I were you," he said, and helped her into it.

"Doctor's orders," said Karey, lifting one eyebrow a little quizzically.

She smiled as she walked out of the cabin. Ralph loved to have his own way and was like a pleased child when he got it. So far, she had found herself doing exactly what he wanted. She was in that condition of mind when she was satisfied to be managed rather than to assert her own will. But she was a little surprised at herself. She used to be so independent. Even during her engagement to Noel, whom she had adored, she had usually done what she wanted to. Perhaps that was because Noel had instinctively shared her every wish.

Karey and Ralph strolled up and down the deck, arm-in-arm, and watched the docks gradually fade into the distance. When the gong sounded for lunch they went down to the first saloon and ate a good meal. Karey was never seasick and Ralph was an excellent sailor, so the sea held no fears for either of them.

This was Friday morning. On Tuesday, early, they expected to touch Gibraltar. That would be the end of the short sea journey for them. After that, Spain, and to this part of her honeymoon Karey was really looking forward. She looked forward to it still more after twenty-four hours on board. There was nothing to do but sit about and read or play deck-tennis or stroll up and down the deck. Karey found it a little boring. But Ralph thoroughly enjoyed himself.

She had never known anybody enjoy things so completely as Ralph. His enthusiasm was abundant. He flung himself into deck sports with a vigour which left her gasping. He was tireless. Always ruddy, buoyant, claiming that he felt as though he were "sitting on top of the world." He was a martinet about health. Did his exercises every morning before breakfast. Took a cold plunge. And when at length he had to admit a little fatigue, he could lie in a deck-chair with his feet on the rails and a hat tilted over his eyes, and sleep soundly, in spite of the noise that went on round him.

During those four intimate days and nights, voyaging to Gibraltar, Karey was given ample opportunity of studying this husband whom she had married for reason ever afterwards inexplicable to herself. He was still a necessity to her; an invaluable friend; a reliable tonic. But never once could she look at him, thrilling, and say: "This is my lover!"

He could never be her lover in every sense of the word, because

:ven when their bodies were one, their minds were segregated. 3etween them there could never be that complete fusion of spirit is well as body which woman finds a necessity, although a man :an do without it. That was the missing link, and the longer Karey ived with Ralph, the more acutely she was aware of it.

As a surgeon, a doctor, Ralph was indubitably clever. But she felt that when he was apart from his profession, he also left his brains behind him. He was just a big, healthy, masculine animal, with a mentality that needed no stimulant. He never opened a book unless it was on the subject of medicine. He laughed at Karey because she was rarely without a book in her hand; was amused because she liked occasionally to indulge in philosophy, or a little intellectual argument. But he invariably switched away from any intensive discussion and said:

"Let's take a walk . . ." or: "What about a game of quoits . . ."

Or—more often than not—he put an arm around her and wanted to kiss or caress her. Possession of her had in no way diminished his passion. He was an insatiable lover in the physical sense. But there, selfishness was to be a stumbling-block to Ralph's own ultimate success with her. She was not in love in the sense that he was; she did not want too much love-making. His intense masculinity was so overpowering that it exhausted her. It was mental companionship which she most needed. She missed it more and more as time wore on.

Ralph's lack of musical appreciation did not, for the moment, trouble her. She could never associate him with music and in any case she avoided it like the plague. It was altogether too reminiscent of Noel and her lost happiness.

But sometimes she wished that Ralph would sit beside her, quietly, just holding her hand, and see with her the beauty of simple things; of a starlit night at sea; of moonlight on the rippling water as they ploughed through it; of a distant ship passing them by like a slender serpent with a hundred winking eyes. But Ralph never seemed to be affected by the little moments of beauty. On nights which left her wistful-eyed and silent, he would stretch and pound his chest and yawn and say:

"Fine air, this ozone. Breathe it into your lungs, Karey, and then we'll turn in, old girl."

There was no romance in Ralph! And Karey, although she had buried so much of herself with Noel, was still incurably romantic at heart. Something deep down in her resented Ralph's lack of it.

She supposed that he would have liked her to call him "old

boy." But she was not of Ralph's hearty breed and could not make herself so.

She rarely used endearments when she spoke to Ralph. She was not that same Karey who had felt life welling up in her like a glorious fountain when she looked at Noel; the Karey who had been able to answer with a dozen endearments when he had whispered: *"Karey, sweet!"*

But she was comparatively happy at the beginning of this honeymoon; happier, perhaps, than she had expected to be; and the voyage to Gibraltar was unmarked by any dissension or disturbance between herself and Ralph.

He was so pleased with life, and himself in particular, that she felt an almost maternal desire to keep him satisfied—not to spoil this honeymoon, which was, after all, his particular reward for a year and a half of dogged devotion.

Sometimes when she was alone she would sink into a state of melancholy, weighed down by depression which was difficult to conquer. Everything was wrong. She ought never to have married Ralph. She must have been mad. How could she possibly go on living for the rest of her life with a man who was so out of tune with her? How could she have given Ralph all that should have belonged to Noel?

Such moments left her in a condition of frantic misery. And it was only Ralph's unlimited enthusiasm and quite sincere passion for her which could cure her of her melancholy. She could not and would not let him down. It would be unfair to let him see one tear, one expression which might convey to him that she was not content, after all that he had done for her. And if there were times when she would have liked to speak about Noel, unburdened her troubled heart, she realised that Ralph was the last person to whom she could do it. Even now that he was married to her he was still profoundly jealous of the dead man.

It was an unwritten rule between them that Noel's name was never mentioned.

There was just one critical moment which might have disturbed the peace of their honeymoon quite considerably. But Ralph's own lack of imagination prevented catastrophe. It was as well that he was not sensitive to her every mood.

On the night before they reached Gibraltar, a concert was held in the first saloon. Karey went up on deck so as to avoid the music as soon as it began. Not that she expected it to worry her, because she was too good a musician to be emotionally disturbed by bad

nusic, and there was not likely to be any real talent on board. But he did not care to risk it.

Unfortunately, wherever she went, the strains of the piano and of singing followed her. And as luck would have it a young man, with a moderately good baritone, chose a song which had been one of Noel's favourites.

The familiar melody crept through the still night and found its way to Karey's ears. Wrapped in her fur coat, fair head bare to the breeze, she was leaning over the rails, smoking a cigarette. Ralph had been carried off by three other men to play bridge in the smoking-room.

She winced as Christina Rossetti's famous words reached her:

"When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me,
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree . . ."

Death . . . how strange that Noel used to sing so often of death and laugh about it; because it had held no fears for him. She bit hard on her lower lip and the cigarette fell from her fingers into the water. Folding her arms on the rail, she bowed her head upon them.

The song went on:

"I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain;
And dreaming through the twilight,
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget."

She felt suddenly that her heart was being broken all over again.

" '*Haply I may remember,*' " she whispered to herself, " '*And haply may forget . . .*' Noel, Noel, I haven't forgotten and I never will. Noel, if you can hear me, try to believe that Ralph has only such a very little of me. The other part is all yours for ever. I was so tired, and so much alone, that's why I married. It wasn't because I forgot for a single moment. Oh, *Noel!*"

The music in the saloon ceased. There came the sound of clapping hands and laughter. A woman with an American twang began to sing a jazz tune:

"Can't we talk it over,
Let's talk it over . . .

"I hate the thought of spending nights all alone,
Missing the thrill of night that we've known,
Can't we talk it over,
Before it's over,
Before you whisper good-bye for ever . . ."

Karey put her fingers in her ears. Her lips were quivering and the tears were raining down her cheeks. Even that stupid song . . . she and Noel had danced to it many a time. Even those foolish words had a significance. For her and Noel it was all over . . . *all over.*

She caught her breath on a sob and rushed down to her cabin, took off her coat, and with shaking fingers poured a can of hot water into the basin and began to sluice her face. She was terrified that Ralph might come in and find her like this. She could never explain how, or why, she was feeling this way at the very commencement of her honeymoon with him.

She was still vigorously sponging her face when the cabin door opened and Ralph appeared.

"Hullo, darling—are you turning in? I won't be long. Just finishing a rubber. Damn good game. I've taken ten bob off old Colonel Mitcham and that doctor fellow who's in the hospital at Gib."

Karey hid her face in a towel and pretended to be drying it.

"Glad you've won!" she said brightly behind the towel.

"You been listening to the concert?" he asked.

Her body trembled.

"No."

"Thought you were fond of music," said Ralph tactlessly. "Ah, well! I won't be long, darling. Give me a kiss."

She had prayed that he would not ask for this. After those few moments of anguished remembrance she could not bear to be caressed by Ralph or by any man in the world. Ralph, however, drew the towel away from her face and kissed her vigorously. If her face was wet and white and her eyes blurred, he did not see it. Or else he imagined that she looked that way because she had just been washing.

He left her, whistling, quite out of tune.

The situation saved, Karey lay down on her bed, turned her face to the pillow, switched off the little light above her head and stayed like that in the darkness, regathering her shattered strength. And she knew then, although she hardly dared admit it even to

herself, that she ought never to have married Ralph. Never while she was still capable of feeling like this about Noel at the slightest provocation.

They landed at Gibraltar at sunrise. Karey was up and dressed by half-past five and out, while Ralph was still shaving. Wherever she went, Lascars were washing the deck. Running water pursued her down the white boards, but at last she found a dry spot and stood leaning over the rails, enraptured by what she saw.

Yesterday, sailing serenely down the Portuguese coast, it had been calm and lovely, and after the cool winds and persistent rain in England the sun had seemed a miracle, warmer every hour. But this was the real miracle, this waking from sleep to find herself facing the most picturesque of all England's strongholds.

"The Rock" towered up from the depths of a brilliant blue sea; mighty, invulnerable, defiant of the ages. The town and the harbour nestled at the foot of it, with houses straggling all the way up the hill. The upper part of the Rock was indistinguishable, buried in the depths of clouds. Gibraltar steamed under drenching vapour. Yet for miles round there was sunshine and an exquisite sky, opalescent and rose, and blue.

Karey asked a passing ship's officer about this strange cloud which hung over Gibraltar.

"That's the Levante," he told her. "The curse of old Gib. More often than not it's there when one lands. But it'll lift later on, and then it will be warm enough."

Karey pointed to a dark outline of coast to the right of her.

"And that?"

"Africa!"

He hurried away and left Karey staring wide-eyed before her. Africa! How thrilling to think that this sinister, barren, undulating curve of coastline fringed that gigantic country of jungle, mountain and plain, which had for all time spelt glamour for the untravelled man.

Karey, who had never been farther than France, could not help being strangely excited this morning as the boat ploughed its way nearer the harbour and she could look from one side to another and say:

"That is Africa . . . there lies Tangier . . . that must be Algeçiras . . . Spain, where Ralph and I are going to begin life together."

Inevitably there leapt to her mind the thought:

"Noel would have loved this . . ."

But she quickly banished Noel's memory and turned her attention to her husband who came up on deck, smiling and pleased with life, to tell her that breakfast was ready.

He took her arm and led her down the deck towards the door of the saloon.

"Warmish. And it will be a good deal more so where we're going."

"I love it," said Karey, and went regretfully down to the dining-room. She would have liked to stay out here to drink in the beauty of the rose and gold morning and watch "the Rock" grow more distinct as they drew nearer it.

After that, the rush of landing. They anchored close to Gibraltar and the tender came out to fetch them. Half the ship seemed to be disembarking. A variety of tourists, guides, and officials swarmed on to the boats; eager to conduct parties to Tangier for the day, before the boat went on her way to Australia. Karey and Ralph found themselves in the tender moving quickly away from the boat. She looked huge, now, her white bulk rising well above them.

When they stepped on shore and waited there for the luggage to come, they were surrounded by a crowd of gesticulating jabbering Spaniards. They all looked hot and brown and dusty; straw hats on the sides of their heads, white teeth glistening, dark eyes swift to glance with approval at the slender Englishwoman with her golden hair and exquisite clothes. In the eye of every Spaniard there is ready admiration for a pretty woman, so Karey was to discover. That is just part of his make-up and means nothing in particular.

A big American saloon car with a Spanish driver had been sent from the villa at Torremolinos to meet them. They drove through Gibraltar, through the English customs, then through the gates of La Linea into the heart of Spain.

Karey was to find at the very beginning of her holiday that there is no sense of time in Spain, and no hope of making a Spaniard hurry. It was a lovely, lazy country. One's mind became pleasantly doped by the heat and the languor of it; one ceased to want to hurry.

Ralph, being a man of action, used to working by watch and chart, sat in the car, chafing and grumbling because they had to wait half an hour at the customs. A couple of officials strolled out and examined their passports, opened one suitcase and searched for contraband goods, then strolled away again. There was trouble about the tyres. In Spain every tyre is examined and the driver had just put on a new one. It was fully half an hour before they

got away, after much heated argument between the chauffeur and the officials.

Karey sat back and smiled.

"Aren't they delicious——"

"Damned annoying," was Ralph's verdict. "Why can't the fools hurry!"

Then Karey caught a glimpse of a white wall half covered with bougainvillæ. Oh, those white walls of Spain . . . she was so soon to become accustomed to them and to love them. Blazing white in the sunshine and always a marvellous background for colour. Against it the bougainvillæ was enchanting, brilliant carmine and purple. Karey pointed it out to Ralph.

"Look, Ralph! And look at that palm. Oh, my dear, this is really Spain—wonderful—exciting."

"Nice bit of colour," admitted Ralph, "but I wish the fellow would get on."

They moved forward at last. Down a white, splendid road in a splendour of sunshine. This was the best part of the morning. Almost at once they met two donkeys coming towards them. One with wide panniers stuffed with pale-green sugar-cane. One ridden by a dark-skinned old man with the inevitable straw hat and a flower behind his ear and a cigarette between his lips.

He smiled and nodded at the English people in the big car.

"*Buenos*," he called out.

Ralph did nothing, but Karey looked after him with shining eyes and said:

"What a dear old man! I must learn to speak Spanish, Ralph. *Buenos* means 'good morning.' We must say it back."

"You want to be careful whom you talk to in this country," said Ralph.

Karey laughed at him.

"That sounds sinister. People who've lived out here say that Spanish are the most friendly race in the world, and if you treat them nicely they'll do anything for you."

"Humph!" said Ralph. "And I've also heard that if you get into the hands of the doctors here, you're for the grave. They're a lot of butchers."

"How lucky I am to have a good surgeon for a husband," said Karey. "I shall feel quite safe with you."

The drive from Gibraltar to Malaga took three hours. Magnificent scenery all the way; the shimmer of blue sea on the right, the mountains on the left. A gold, fierce landscape, splashed with savage colours. Scarlet poppies in fields of silver-green barley; wild

anchusas, amazingly blue, threading through the green. Cork trees with brown, naked trunks and grotesque branches. Giant cacti throwing out their wicked spikes fringing the road nearly all the way. Here and there a ruined castle which had belonged to the early Moors. And always the unchanging sea—the matchless blue of the Mediterranean.

Everywhere there were goats . . . hundreds of goats, brown and white and dappled, leaping and running in giant flocks. And always donkeys . . . old and young, white and grey, shaggy and tired and patient under their loads.

They passed only two cars the whole eighty miles. And during that drive Spain laid a possessive hand upon Karey which was never to lose its hold. It was a beautiful, primitive country, and she adored it. It appealed to all that was warm and fierce and temperamental deep down in her.

Every now and then they were stopped by the *carabineros*, who examined the car and then, satisfied that they were not smugglers, allowed them to pass.

And now when Karey looked at one of the smart, dark-skinned young Spaniards in the picturesque uniform of the *guardia civil* she smiled and said:

"Buenos."

Black eyes, warm with approval, smiled back at the white fair beauty of the English girl and answered:

"Buenos—Buenos días, Señora."

They passed through fishing villages, picturesque streets, small white houses, some with tiny gardens full of roses in full bloom, which seemed wonderful to Karey, because it was early April and in England the country was still bare of flowers save for a few daffodils. Here the wild flowers of the Andalusian spring were intoxicating, and already the lemon-trees were heavy with ripe fruit.

In every little house the door was open and fat, brown, black-eyed babies, tumbled, half-naked in the sun, sprawling on the doorsteps. Old, bent women with faces like wrinkled brown nuts, and black handkerchiefs tied under their chins, stood and watched the car roll by. Karey thought the beauty of the younger women astonishing. They walked superbly; graceful creatures with glowing cheeks and velvet eyes and hair black as the raven's wing

Nearly all of them wore bright colours; they were splashes of brilliant colour from the painter's box on the white roads and against the white walls; and each one with a flower in her hair or behind her ear.

"Aren't they enchanting!" Karey exclaimed.

Ralph, the practical, answered:

"All right, now, but they run to fat. A girl of your age out here is considered past her prime."

"I'm glad I'm not," laughed Karey, but wished, behind the laughter, that Ralph would not always spoil the romance of everything.

They rounded incredible curves and bends in that amazing road; went downhill and up again; losing the sea for a few minutes and then finding it again. Each time they came round a new corner, Karey found something new and wonderful to look at.

They stopped at Marbella for petrol, and the car was immediately surrounded by a little crowd, men, women, and children, looking at them curiously. A beggar whined and held out his hand. Karey would have thrown him a *peseta* but Ralph stopped her.

"I've been warned not to give money to these beggars. They're a filthy crew and no more starving than we are. Don't do it, Karey."

She let him have his way, but was disappointed. She would have liked him to empty his own pockets because this was their honeymoon, their first day in Spain, and everything was glorious, and to distribute *largesse* is a glorious thing. Noel would have understood that. Ah, but Ralph was not Noel, and she must not make comparisons, for therein lay destruction of any hope of happiness between herself and the man she had married.

Soon after midday they came to Torremolinos; a village of white villas and cottages and amazing flowers, not unlike the others through which they had passed. But here was the villa in which they were going to spend their honeymoon. Santa Clara . . . low built, square, with a wide veranda running right round it, and a garden which looked to Karey like Paradise itself. As they drove through the gates they passed great clumps of scarlet geranium, bold, vivid red against the white walls. Two huge palm trees stood sentinel at the gates and to the left lay the Moorish garrison which dated back to 1600 and was built upon sheer rock above the sea.

Terrace after white terrace, winding down to the water. Wild pink geraniums tumbling in cascades out of the walls. Green fringe of palms; blue shimmer of anchusas in the green grass between the terraces; and the little covered huts . . . from which one could look straight down into the sunlit sea

To the right lay the brown beach and a fishing village straggling along it. To the left in a haze of sunshine, Malaga, and beyond, a violet line of mountains and one snow-covered peak of Sierra Nevada.

Karey held her breath and filled her vision with the beauty of it all as the car stopped outside Santa Clara.

"This is the perfect place, Ralph."

He squeezed her hand, moved by her pleasure.

"It is rather good, darling."

"Ralph——" she began tremulously

But he had pulled out a bundle of notes and had turned his thoughts to paying the Spanish driver, wondering how much to give him for a tip.

Later they found themselves in the small flat which they had booked for a month. This was built in that part of the garrison which they called the Cuartel. A little square of low white buildings with balconies. Lemon-trees so close that one could lean out over the balcony, put out a hand and pull off a ripe fruit. At the top of the Cuartel, a wide terrace; below, the sea, and everywhere the drenching sunshine.

The window of Karey's little sitting-room looked out on this terrace and down at the blue water. From the bedroom she could see the fishermen's huts on the brown beach. An oasis from the cares and worries of the world. Here was utter peace; no noise save the chanting voice of a Spanish girl, singing while she dipped her pitcher into the big barrel of water which stood at the gates of the Cuartel; or the crying of swifts which circled ceaselessly overhead, darting like tiny black arrows through the sunshine.

For a moment, Karey stood very still, waiting for Ralph to join her. He was interviewing the proprietors of the *Pension*, finding out what time they must go up to the villa for meals. They would have to walk up there for their baths, as well. There was no bathroom in this tiny, primitive flat with its whitewashed walls and red stone floor. Few comforts. Just a strip of rug beside each bed, a green painted dressing-chest and washstand. Karey had eyes only for the bowl of flowers which had been placed on that green chest. A rough bowl from the local pottery, filled with wild flowers, scarlet and blue, pink and white. The simplicity of it was perfect and appealed to Karey so much more than the luxurious hotel to which they might have gone in the town of Malaga itself.

When Ralph joined Karey he found her leaning out of her window in a blaze of sunshine.

"Better put a hat on, old girl," he called out as he came into the little flat He seemed to fill it with his big presence and his footsteps were noisy upon the stone floor. "You can soon get sunstroke out here."

She turned to him, sighing, and put a hand up to her hair. It was the colour of champagne, sparkling in the sunshine.

"Who minds sunstroke? Oh, Ralph, what a gorgeous place! I shall never cease to be grateful to the friends who sent us here."

He yawned and began to fill his pipe as he looked round him.

"Quaint spot, isn't it? I must say the sun's hot, which is a pleasant change after England. But isn't it a bit rough-and-ready?"

"That's what's so lovely. It's primitive—a hundred years back."

He put out a hand and gently tweaked her ear.

"My little romantic! Well, I'm glad you like it."

"But don't you?" she exclaimed, flushed and wide-eyed.

"I expect I shall when I've got used to it. But wouldn't it have been better if we'd had a room up at the villa near the bathroom and that sort of thing?"

"No!" said Karey vehemently. "This Cuartel—these funny little flats are most enchanting. I don't mind a bit about having to walk up to the villa with a towel and have a bath."

Enthusiastic, pleased, she took his arm and pressed it as she looked round her.

"You must like it, Ralph," she said coaxingly.

The rare caress from her hand fired the man. He put his pipe down and caught her close.

"I like you," he whispered.

Karey moved restlessly in the circle of his arms. His lips were hot against her ear. She did not want him to make love to her. She wanted him to lean with her out of that window and look down with her at that brown beach and blue, glistening sea, and the shadow of those fascinating, savage mountains behind the village. She wanted him to sigh with her and say :

"This is heaven . . ."

But Ralph, roused by the sweetness of her, had buried his face against her neck and was whispering :

"*You're* the loveliest thing in Spain. Give me a kiss, Karey. No . . . not just one . . . more than that——"

Her cheeks were as red now as the poppies in the earthenware bowl and her heart beat a trifle fast with resentment. Yes, she actually resented his embrace, this morning. Ralph as a lover was so inartistic, so insensitive to her mood. She was not flattered, just at this particular moment, to be told that she was "the loveliest thing in Spain." She had wanted him to share in her fervent appreciation of the little flat and the scenery.

She tried to move her face away from his lips.

"Isn't it lunch-time?" she said weakly.

"I do believe you're shy, darling," he laughed, and still holding her fast with one arm, pushed the front door of the flat so that it slammed. Then he added: "One moment . . . I'm just going to close the shutters."

Then suddenly, for the first time during her brief married life, which was, after all, of only five days' duration—Karey felt that she could not bear this physical contact with Ralph. She was angry: angered by his lack of imagination. She pushed him violently away from her.

"Ralph—*please*—don't be so silly—let me go, if you don't mind. You're hurting my arm."

He released her, open-mouthed with astonishment. His face was crimson.

"I'm sorry. I didn't know I was hurting you," he said stiffly. "And I can't quite see why I should be called silly. However——"

With an injured air he took up the pipe again and proceeded to light it. Karey, her heart beating very fast indeed, turned her attention to her luggage. She felt a little sick. Stealing a glance at her husband, she saw that his face was still red and sulky. She had offended him by rejecting his embrace. She had not meant to hurt him. But somehow her own fastidious feelings had been offended. The sense of panic which had gripped her on board ship last night while she had stood on deck listening to Noel's old song, returned to her now.

Was marriage like this? Was her own marriage to be just a constant possessiveness on the part of the man . . . a constant demand for her body and never an appeal to her mind? Was it always to be like this, to go on for years . . . Ralph being stirred only by the sensuous side and impervious to her spiritual needs.

She thought:

"I couldn't stand it . . . it would be too maddening . . . too infuriating for words."

Back crept the memory of Noel. He had wanted her in the way that Ralph did . . . she would not have wished it otherwise. It was a natural part of love. But he would never have been quite so crude as this. She looked back and remembered that Noel had been capable of spending hours with her, in discussion, in friendly argument, in mutual appreciation of art and beauty without so much as touching her hand. There had been a time for all things—and the time for love-making had come as well—being in the normal scheme of things.

With trembling hands Karey lifted one or two things out of her suitcase and placed them on her bed, her brain working furiously.

She was facing facts . . . and inevitably she discovered the deeper truth: it would not have mattered at what hour of the day or night Noel had taken her in his arms—she had loved him wildly, desperately. That made all the difference. Whatever her mood, she would have melted under his touch.

She was not in love with Ralph. And he, being unimaginative, could not understand the necessity for treading warily, delicately when he needed response from her. Poor Ralph! It was not his fault. It was hers, for having married him.

He had been so kind, so good to her after her father's death. But she was beginning, only too early, to realise the difference between having a man for a friend and a man for a husband The friendly Ralph she could go on liking and wanting. It was the possessive husband whom she was beginning to dread.

Then suddenly there swept over her an appalling sense of disaster—disaster which must be averted. She must not let thoughts like these come between Ralph and herself. Otherwise a gulf would yawn between them which must inevitably widen every day of their lives. Such an idea terrified her.

Her nature was impulsive, and it was generous impulse which made her leave her unpacking, spring to her feet, run to Ralph's side, and put her arms around his neck.

"Dear old thing—don't look so gloomy. I didn't mean to be horrid. Was I very horrid to you?"

His brow cleared and the pipe was again abandoned.

"Not very. A bit perhaps. You darling, Karey . . ."

This time the green shutters were drawn and the sunlight excluded. Ralph was entirely happy again. And Karey was happy, only because she had made him so.

That was the beginning of their honeymoon in Spain.

IV

Ten days later, at two o'clock one afternoon, Karey passed through the gates of Santa Clara into the village of Torremolinos, and started out for a walk, all by herself. At this time most people took a siesta. Karey had left Ralph lying on his bed in a shuttered room, gently snoring. He was inclined to snore when he lay on his back which she found disturbing to her night's rest.

As a rule she rested after lunch as well, but she could never sleep in the daytime. Ralph, of course, had a genius for being able to sleep at any time. She envied him. There were times when she lay awake, listening to those regular snores, wishing that her brain were not so wide awake, and that she could emulate his example.

She was in a particularly restless mood to-day. She felt nervy and irritable. Perhaps it was because she could not sleep very well. Already she was making up her mind to have a separate bedroom from Ralph when they got back to London. Apart from this irritation and her quite hopeless attempt to make Ralph share in her deep delight in this sunny, lovely country, Karey was enjoying her honeymoon. But it was Spain rather than the fact of the honeymoon which appealed to Karey, though she did not care to admit it even to herself. Ralph, when he was not being too possessive, too intent upon ordering her about, was extremely kind, and from most points of view an excellent husband.

They spent every morning on the beach, bathing, and lying in the sun. So hot was that sun that it could only be taken in small doses, and Karey had found it necessary to rub herself from head to foot with coconut oil.

Her body was beginning to brown and her throat and arms and legs were deliciously tanned. The extreme fairness of her hair in contrast to the brown made her strikingly attractive. She was a trifle thin, still, and losing weight out here, perhaps because her nerves were bad and her mind so restive. But she was physically fit, with all the swimming and walking and that healing sunshine which seemed to soak through one's very body.

Karey loved those mornings on the beach. The water was still cold at this time of year, but after the first shock it was exhilarating to come out, all glowing and lie in the heat.

Invariably a crowd of small children came and sat close by them, staring with their big black eyes. They annoyed Ralph, but Karey found them amusing. They were inquisitive, like little animals, but they meant no harm. And there was scarcely a morning when one or two youths—lithe, tanned, young Spaniards, did not stroll up and stop to stare at the fair-haired, beautiful English girl who lay on a rug with a parasol shading her face and her lovely back oiled and glistening in the sunlight.

Other people out here, who knew the place, told them that these boys were like the children—friendly and inquisitive rather than insolent. But Ralph was infuriated by them. He sent some of them off, addressing them sharply, in broken Spanish.

"How dare they stare at you like that!" he had stormed, after they had moved away.

Karey had been sorry for the boys whom he had cursed and still sorrier for Ralph. He was so pitifully unimaginative.

This was the first time she had come out alone since they had arrived in Torremolinos. She felt a strange relief. It was good to

be by herself! She could stop and look at everything without feeling that she must move on in case Ralph was bored. Ralph, having walked through the village once, found nothing else to look at. He liked to go into Malaga; wanted to see a bull-fight. He liked shows; exhibitions. But Karey preferred to wander up the mountains and pick wild iris, purple, yellow, and white; and rock-roses. Sit quietly, without speaking, looking at the young almond trees and the olives which turned from green to silver when the leaves stirred in the warm wind; and at the deep blueness of the southern sky.

She liked to stop an old Spaniard on a donkey and talk to him in what Spanish she could muster, or exchange greetings with the women in the doorways of their white cabins; or play a moment with a fat, delicious baby whose velvet eyes and black eyelashes might be the envy of a Hollywood film-star.

She could do those things, to-day, without Ralph to drag her on and say:

"Come along, old girl. They're such a dirty lot——"

She did not find them dirty. The roads were not clean, but the little houses of the peasants were scrupulously kept and she wanted to get to know these people; to know the real Spain, and avoid the places of interest to which the tourists flocked.

It was in these little things that she and Ralph were so different. Two weeks of married life had taught her that it is the little things that count . . . make for happiness or the reverse. The little irritations which shadow happiness and might accumulate until they blotted out that happiness utterly.

She did not want to fail Ralph. Still less did she wish to feel that he was failing her. But they were temperamentally apart. They moved, instinctively, in opposite directions. As long as she was sweet and docile he was happy, but if she insisted upon going her own way, he sulked. She had begun to know and dread that sulky look upon Ralph's handsome face. To-day it was good to walk alone and do as the spirit moved her. Ralph would sleep for an hour. She would be back by the time he was ready to go out again.

This was the hottest time of the day, but Karey could stand the heat much better than Ralph. She wore a thin sleeveless dress, palest yellow silk, and a wide-brimmed hat of yellow straw, no stockings, and a pair of those canvas, rope-soled shoes which everybody wore out there and could buy for a few *pesetas*. She carried a camera which she had taken in case she found something particularly good to photograph.

She passed through the village and on to the Malaga road. To the right, below her, lay the sea, almost a violet blue in the mellow light of the afternoon. The snow peaks of Granada were amazingly clear to-day. She walked along the white, dusty road, smiling and nodding at the peasants on their donkeys. They were swift to smile and greet her in response. The noisy little motor-bus which ran between Malaga and Gibraltar, rattled past her, the driver sounding his horn loudly and continuously. She had been in that bus and found it most amusing, but Ralph had disliked it. There was much coughing and spitting which he found disgusting, and some of the dark, pock-marked faces revolted him.

"One might catch anything out here," he said, and had brought up his medical knowledge to prove why Spain, as a country, was insanitary and the drinking water was to be avoided.

But to Karey it was all so natural that she could not bother her head about all such details. She just loved the picturesque beauty of the country and the naïve peasants, and she wanted Ralph to love them, too, instead of criticising everything in his practical fashion.

She turned off the main road and walked a little way up the hill. She did not know where it led and did not mind. Now and then she took off her big hat, lifted her face to the sun and shut her eyes, sighing. It was good to be alive, and out here, and if only one had the perfect companion. . . .

Karey immediately switched her thoughts from this subject. She had married Ralph, knowing exactly what he was, and she must not whine if she found, now, that she had made a tremendous mistake.

She came to a wrought iron gateway, which was half open, and paused to look through into the garden which belonged to a big white villa, standing at the top of the hill. It looked cool and beautiful down that avenue of palm trees. The long borders of red carnations were wonderful.

Karey felt a sudden desire to see inside that garden. Feeling rather like a naughty child, she crept in, through the gateway and wandered down the palm avenue. She came finally to a shady terrace overlooking the sea. Below this terrace were beds of roses in full bloom; below this again, more terraces; white walls, fig trees, geraniums, creamy jasmine, and oleanders which were not yet in bloom.

For a while Karey stood on this terrace, bathed in sunshine, looking down at the sea. Then she turned her attention to the villa.

It was not white, as she had first thought, but a delicate shade of apricot with jade shutters. The veranda posts were covered with trailing, cream-coloured jasmine. On one side of the steps a hibiscus tree flaunted the gay, insolent pink of great exotic blossoms. It was hot and so still here in this hour that Karey stood for a moment in profound contemplation. The one sign of animation was a tiny lizard which darted across her path and disappeared amongst the sun-baked stones of a rockery close beside her.

She felt suddenly that she must see inside this villa. It charmed and intrigued her. Perhaps it was empty—nobody was about. Perhaps it was for sale, or to let? It was a dream house—the sort of house she had wanted to live in all her life. She smiled to herself and walked up the veranda steps.

"I suppose this is impudence on my part, but I just *must* see inside. I can ask for a drink . . . I *am* thirsty after that climb up the hill."

She walked inside. Here was a great hall with no furniture except a carved cupboard of Spanish mahogany and an antique brazier which was filled with yellow flowers.

Karey hesitated.

"Is anybody here?" she called out.

No answer. The house was as still as the sun-drenched garden.

Karey glanced leftwards and saw a huge, cool looking room with very little furniture in it except a grand piano. Her attention was at once struck and held by the sight of that piano, because the lid was open and there were sheets of music scattered on the floor. It was a room, obviously, of a musician and somebody must have just been playing. With a queer constriction of the heart, Karey walked to that piano as though Fate led her there. It reminded her vividly of the cherished past: her music; Noel, who had been so much part of it.

For a moment she stood staring down at the ivory keys. A Bluthner grand. Why should she walk inside a strange Spanish villa on the Malaga road and find a German piano similar to her own? The coincidence was extraordinary. She had not touched a piano since Noel's death. She had not wanted music. But something stronger than herself made her sit down on that music stool, drop her camera in her lap, and run her fingers over the keys. As she struck the first few chords she thought:

"I'm quite crazy . . . I'll be turned out or handed over to a policeman!"

But she had to play . . . and something seemed to swell, painfully yet ecstatically in her heart, as she broke into the opening

bars of a song which Noel had often sung to her. The tone of the piano was glorious and the melody became part of the drowsy golden hour.

Then suddenly from a distance came the sound of a man's voice singing . . . singing the song that Karey played. Just for an instant she was too astonished to stop the accompaniment, but as the voice grew nearer and more distinct she faltered in her playing and let her hands drop to her lap. Her face had gone white under the rosy tan. She stared incredulously before her.

That voice . . . great heavens! It was a baritone, light, charming, *exactly like Noel's*. He had sung that last line in just the way that Noel used to sing it. . . .

The voice went on singing without the piano, then paused and called:

"Go on . . . why don't you go on? . . . I don't know who you are, but you're playing so very nicely!"

Rigid, rooted to that piano-stool sat Karey with her eyes staring in front of her. It might have been Noel speaking. Her throat felt dry and her knees were trembling. Of course, she was crazy . . . this was a dream. . . . .

She saw a man come into the room. A slimly built young man who walked gracefully and lightly on rope-soled sandals, like everybody else out here. He wore white linen trousers and a cotton shirt, open at the throat . . . and he looked young and brown and happy.

Karey only gave one startled glance at him; at the black, smooth, attractive head and the fine-cut face with the dark, brilliant eyes. Then she sprang to her feet and threw up a hand, pressing the back of it to her lips as though in terror. This *was* a dream . . . one of those many dreams which she had had and from which she would inevitably awaken . . . *a dream that Noel had come back*. Karey cried aloud . . . a desperate cry that echoed through the big room:

"Noel! Noel! *Noel!*"

Then everything went black, and she felt herself falling. The last thing of which she was conscious was that a man's arms caught and held her and the voice that was Noel's said:

"My God!"

V

After that, no more. It seemed a very long time before the shadows lifted and she came back to the world of sunshine and cobalt sky and a shimmering sea mirroring the blueness. Green

palms . . . scarlet hibiscus . . . creamy jasmine. A cool veranda and a long cane chair with cushions in it. She, herself, lying in that chair . . . and a man bending over her with a glass in his hand. The man who seemed to be Noel and yet could not be.

Anxiously he watched her. As her long lashes lifted and showed him the grey-green eyes, he said:

"Are you all right? Are you sure you're all right now? Will you drink this brandy?"

She sat up, her heart pounding. Her hat was off and a coil of silver fair hair had become loosened from the pins and tumbled over her neck. The man looked at her, wonder and admiration mingling with his astonishment. This was all very dramatic and unexpected and he was not quite sure what it all meant. But he did know that she was the loveliest thing he had ever seen. She seemed to him a poet's dream, so slender, so exquisite with her tanned bare arms and throat, lying against the cushions in that pale yellow dress, staring up at him with frightened, beautiful eyes. He spoke again, gently:

"Drink some of this brandy."

"No!" she panted. "No, thank you."

They stared into each other's eyes again. Then Karey cried piteously:

"You aren't Noel? Of course you aren't. I'm so sorry. But you're so terribly, *terribly* like him."

"Noel!" he repeated; "you must mean my cousin, Noel Farringham. He died last autumn, you know."

"Yes," she whispered, "oh yes, I know."

"My name's Dickon Farringham," he added. "We always were very alike. When we were up at Oxford together we were constantly mistaken for each other. My father and his were brothers. Resemblances between first cousins can be extraordinary—I've heard of other cases——"

"I see!" she broke in, a hand still to her throat. "I see! You're Noel's cousin Dickon—I've heard him speak of 'Dickon' so often!"

"Then who are you?" he asked, and almost immediately added: "But *of course*, I know. I recognise you now. Noel sent me a snapshot of you. You're Karey."

"Yes," she whispered, "I'm Karey."

He put the glass of brandy down on a table behind him and sat down in a chair at her side. He did not take his gaze from her, but went on staring, leaning forward with hands clasped about his knee.

"God, what an extraordinary coincidence! Karey—why, the

number of times I've had letters from poor old Noel, full of you. It's amazing!"

She shut her eyes and opened them again in a dazed way.

"And I've heard of you, too, dozens and dozens of times. He was so fond of you. He hoped you'd be home for our wedding but——" She broke off and sat dumb, her great eyes staring back into his.

"I didn't get home till months after his death. I've been in Australia. Noel may have told you—I'm junior partner in a book-publishing firm—Greatrix & Co. We have a house in Melbourne, and I've been out there, trying to pull it together."

"Yes, he told me."

"I meant to come and see you when I got back, a month ago, but almost as soon as I landed I had appendicitis and went to a nursing-home. I came out here to recuperate. This villa belongs to great friends of mine and they lent it to me. The last thing I dreamed of was meeting you."

"It never entered my head," she said. "I just walked here—walked in—something seemed to lead me here. Once or twice in my life, I have had queer, psychic instincts. And I know something more than mere coincidence made me come here to-day."

"And then seeing me frightened you to death," he said. "I'm so awfully sorry."

The tenderness in his voice moved her to tears. So like that dear, lost lover, was this cousin Dickon; even the inflection of his voice and a trick he had had of putting his head slightly on one side with that boyish, apologetic smile.

Dickon Farringham saw the tears, like diamonds, sparkle on the girl's lashes, and roll down her cheeks. Impulsively he leaned closer and took one of her hands and held it tightly.

"Don't," he begged, "don't cry, my dear. I couldn't bear you to."

She swallowed hard and a little shudder went through her body. She lay back against the cushions, limp, struggling for control, her slender fingers clinging with unconscious strength to his.

"Sorry. I—I won't—but you don't know how disturbing this is. You're so uncannily like Noel, aren't you?"

"Yes—it's queer—we might have been twins."

"Perhaps his eyes were darker. Yours are more hazel brown."

"Yes—I'm half an inch taller, too."

"Yes, and of course he was so much paler—I mean, I never saw him brown, sunburned like you are."

"Poor old boy," said Dickon, "it was a terrible shock to me when I got Luke's cable. What a tragedy—a rotten end, to be smashed

up in a car—and so full of life and happy about you—his letters were tremendously enthusiastic."

Karey bit hard on her lower lip because it trembled so. Her fingers still clung convulsively to Dickon's hand.

"It was a terrible tragedy," she said; "just four days before our wedding."

"Terrible for you."

"Yes!" she shuddered again and Dickon pressed her hand in silent sympathy.

She seemed to him very like the snapshot which Noel had sent him, only more beautiful. He had never seen anything lovelier than her colouring; neither had he ever seen eyes so full of tragedy. It was plain that the death of her lover had left an indelible mark upon Karey.

"It was so wantonly cruel," at length she spoke again, "so unnecessary. Why should these things happen? What had he ever done——" She broke off, shaking her head helplessly.

"He was one of the best fellows that ever lived," said Dickon gravely, "and God only knows why these things are allowed to happen, but they do!"

"You wrote to me. I had a letter from you, from Melbourne. I remember, now."

"And you wrote to me," he said, nodding, "I've still got your letter."

"I'm afraid it was very short."

"I didn't expect as much," he said gently; "it must have been a frightful effort for you—all of it."

"You can't think what—he meant to me——" she whispered brokenly, and the tears began to chase down her cheeks again.

"Would you rather not talk about it?"

"No—please—it's a relief—I haven't spoken of him for months—and to you, I can—because you loved him—and you're so like him."

He released her hand, pulled a white linen handkerchief from his pocket and touched her cheek with it.

"Please try not to cry—I hate to see you cry."

She took the handkerchief and bit hard at her lip as she wiped the tears away.

"How kind you are."

He made a gesture of protest. But he asked himself who would not have been kind? He was strangely stirred by Karey, by something more than her beauty and the aura of tragedy which clung to her. She was the woman whom Noel had loved. Noel had been

his best friend as well as his cousin. They had been inseparable at Oxford. He had looked forward to coming back from Melbourne, seeing Noel again, meeting his future wife. His wife Karey should have been by the time Dickon landed in England.

And if Noel's death had struck a blow at him, how much more must it have meant to Karey? He could imagine that any woman, having loved Noel, would not easily forget him.

Karey was speaking again in a voice scarcely above a whisper.

"When I heard you singing that Quilter song . . . I thought I was dreaming. It is so uncanny—this resemblance between you. Not only your face—but your voice——"

"Noel had a finer voice than mine."

"It's sufficiently alike to be very striking."

"And you used to play for him?"

"Yes."

"You play beautifully. I couldn't imagine who it was when I heard you begin that song: 'Fain would I change that note'; I, too, thought I was dreaming. In a primitive spot like Torremolinos one scarcely expects to hear one's piano played like that—and one of my favourite Elizabethan songs, too."

"You must have thought it such impudence—I owe you an apology for walking into your villa, but nobody was about, and as I've told you, something drew me—something stronger than I can understand; although now it all seems clearer to me—now that I've found Noel's cousin here."

"I'm glad you did come. It wasn't impudence at all."

"You're awfully kind."

"You've said that before, but I'm not. There's no question of kindness. I wouldn't have missed this meeting for anything in the world."

The colour suddenly tinged her cheeks. He was thankful to see it. That ashen pallor which had been apparent after her fainting fit even with her tan, had troubled him when he first carried her out here.

"As a matter of fact I heard footsteps," he added, "but I was having a bath and couldn't investigate. Maria and José, a married couple, look after me. They're out to-day. This is the afternoon they go into Malaga. That's why you found the place so deserted."

She sat up and drew a deep breath. Some of the strain was going; she felt more normal.

"It's a very lovely place, Mr.—Mr. Farringham."

"No, please!" he protested. "I must be 'Dickon' to you. I've

always thought of you as Karey. Noel wrote so much about 'Karey.'"

"Then I will be Karey to you—Dickon——"

He saw her smile for the first time and his heart gave a queer throb. He began to understand why his cousin had loved this girl so madly. There was something more than ordinarily charming and sweet in her personality.

"Do you love Torremolinos?" he asked her. "I think it's an amazing place—a kind of paradise."

"I think so, too."

"It appeals to me more than any place I've ever been to."

"And to me."

"I'm fit again in a very short time after my operation."

"You are quite well now?"

"Quite. I've been here for a fortnight and I've got another two weeks."

"Two days in Torremolinos would make anybody well again."

"I think you're right. I'm alone, but I haven't felt lonely. There is always my music. I play a lot—one of the inducements my friends offered me was their lovely piano. I don't get much time to play at home. One has to work for one's living——" He gave her that quick, brilliant smile which seemed to take her by the throat. It was Noel—Noel living again.

"So you play as well as sing," she said unsteadily, "I always had to play for Noel."

"You'd be the perfect accompanist, from what I could hear."

She had to swallow hard and keep a tight rein on herself, otherwise she would break down again. Noel had used those very words to her when they had first met.

"Come back to the piano and play again," suddenly Dickon said.

"I haven't touched my music for six months."

"But you mustn't give it up—Noel wouldn't have liked that."

"I haven't been able to—bear it."

He looked at her with deep compassion. How much she must have loved her lover! How rare was such a capacity for loving.

"Anybody who plays as well as you do should not abandon it," he said. "You must come back and play for me one day, if not now. Will you have tea with me? I'll get it for you. Yes—please—don't refuse."

She stood up. Suddenly she became conscious of her loosened hair. With flaming cheeks she began to pin the fair shining coil into some order. His likeness to Noel struck her more forcibly, now that she was standing beside Dickon Farringham. Her fingers

were so unsteady that she could not pin her hair into position. He, gravely watching her, put up a hand and ran it over his own dark, smooth head.

"Don't worry about your hair—it looks nice as it is."

"I must tie it up," she said with a shaky laugh. "I can hardly walk through the village like this."

"Yes, you can. You can do anything in Torremolinos. That's the beauty of this part of Spain. There is no conventionality, no order, and very little law. It's gloriously primitive."

She turned her eyes to the strip of blue, shining sea below the white, flower-covered terraces.

"Yes, it is lovely here."

"Stay and talk to me, Karey, will you?"

The way he looked at her, the manner in which he spoke her name, went to the very depths of her heart. And suddenly, with the piercing sweet remembrance of her lover came the thought of Ralph and that marriage which should never have taken place. This Dickon who stood before her, speaking to her with Noel's voice and smiling at her with Noel's brilliant eyes, made her acutely conscious of an irremediable mistake, because she had never loved Ralph, and had never forgotten Noel. Her marriage had been a betrayal of her real feelings; a disloyalty of the body if not of the mind.

She closed her eyes and swayed suddenly on her feet. The sunlit veranda was spinning around her, and she had a horrible feeling that she was going to faint again.

Then Dickon Farringham's arms held her and that voice, which tore at her heart-strings, said:

"My dear, you're not fit —this has been too much of a shock for you—you must lie down again—indoors where it's cool and away from the sun."

She did not faint, but collapsed limply in his arms and began to cry. Long-drawn sobs that welled from the bottom of her heart. All the old grief surging back; all the old pain which she had tried to stamp upon and which she had believed dead, crowded down upon her with renewed force. Like a broken-hearted child, rather than a passionate woman, she rested in the circle of Dickon's supporting arms, her wet disfigured face pressed to his shoulder.

"Oh, Dickon, Dickon, I loved him so!"

He held her closer, shaken to the depths of his being with pity, and with a queer, sweet ecstasy which was inexplicable and which he did not bother to analyse. He only knew that no woman on earth had ever moved him so swiftly and surely as this fair-haired, lovely

creature who should have been Noel's wife, and whose slight graceful body trembled against his own.

"I know . . . I know just how you must feel, my poor dear."

Impulsively, as though he had known her for a long time, he stroked her hair, kept on smoothing it until some of the agony departed from her. For one queer, heart-shaking instant of illusion she felt that Noel had come back, and these were his sensitive, remembered fingers, caressing her hair; this, his voice begging her not to cry. So many, many nights soon after his death, she used to dream that dream that he was holding her and saying: "You mustn't cry, Karey . . ."

"I can't bear it," she suddenly whispered with her hands clenched "You don't know how awful it's been."

"I can well imagine. Nobody could have loved Noel and felt otherwise."

"You do understand——"

"So well, my dear, I'm nothing like the good fellow that he was, but I know I'm sufficiently like him for it to be very disturbing to you."

"Yes." She drew a sobbing breath. "And yet it's amazingly comforting. It's just as though I've been in prison and this . . . this is letting me out . . . do you know what I mean?"

"I can well believe that you've been in a state of repression. But you need not be with me. Poor little Karey!"

She lifted her head from his shoulder and looked up at him dumbly. Impulsively he bent down and touched her hair with his lips.

"Poor child!" he whispered.

She was strangely comforted by the unexpected sweetness of the caress. He was no stranger. He was a Farringham, the Dickon whom Noel had loved and who had been to him like a brother. And then, creeping through the sense of peace which he was bringing her, returned the memory of Ralph. White to the lips she drew away from Dickon's arms.

He was curiously reluctant to let her go. His heart beat madly. She looked up at him with her luminous eyes and whispered:

"Forgive me. I'm so sorry——"

"You're not to be sorry. There must be understanding between us."

"There is—of course. But I must go now "

"But Karey, aren't you going to stay to tea with me?"

"I can't."

"Please," he begged. "It's been so marvellous meeting you like this and I don't know a soul in Spain."

"I must go back," she said with difficulty. "My—Ralph—my husband, is waiting for me."

Dickon stood still. He glanced swiftly at her left hand. Until this instant he had not noticed that platinum band, and certainly he had not dreamed that Karey would be married. *Married.* But why? If she still felt like this about Noel, why on earth was she married to somebody else?

Karey, watching him dumbly, read disappointment as well as astonishment in his eyes. He made her feel ashamed. It was a horrible feeling. She suddenly covered her face with her hands.

"You must wonder . . . I don't know what to say —" she stammered, keeping her face hidden.

Yes, he was wondering . . . and he was curiously disappointed. Not that he had any right to be. But Dickon Farringham, musician, poet, lover of books, of art, of all things beautiful, understood human nature very well. He was not horrified to find that Karey had married. Why shouldn't she. What he failed to understand was why she should have married when her grief for Noel was still so alive.

"You need not explain anything to me, Karey," he said gently. "Why should you?"

"My behaviour must seem so—so strange. Oh, you can believe me when I tell you that I hardly understand myself!" she broke out passionately. "I've been living in a kind of daze ever since Noel died. Nothing has seemed real. I've just carried on like that song that Noel wrote . . . 'Walk according to natural lore, one foot behind, the other before.' He set those words to music . . . that's how I've felt – just going on. My father died, soon after Noel . . . Ralph . . . Doctor Chesney, my husband, looked after me. He was frightfully good to me——"

She stumbled out the story of her marriage to Ralph. Dickon listened with his grave, dark gaze fixed upon her. He understood well enough. She had been tired of her sorrow and loneliness; drifted into marriage with this doctor, but she had not been in love with him. She did not say so, because she was too decent, too loyal. But Dickon knew it. It was so obvious.

Poor little thing! . . . this very marriage made her an even more tragic figure in his sight. She was not happy. She had been eating, drinking, sleeping, laughing, leading a separate existence. But there was another Karey and another life; the Karey who had loved

Noel and been loved by him. The Karey who had just revealed herself to Dickon.

"I understand everything," he said.

"You would," she whispered, "and you think that Noel would understand, too, don't you?"

"I know it. He would want you to be happy."

"Yes," she said desolately—so desolately that Dickon Farringham felt a tremendous desire to take her in his arms again. How lonely she must have been all these months. It did not bear thinking about. And she was still lonely, in spite of her marriage. That was disaster, indeed. He said gently:

"I'm glad you came—that we've met. We must always be friends, Karey, you and I."

"Please, yes!"

But as she whispered the words, her heart full of gratitude, she wondered if Ralph would be so pleased at this new friendship which she had formed. The meeting with Dickon had reopened the old wound. That, in a fashion, was disloyal to Ralph. He had always been bitterly jealous of Noel He would resent her even knowing this cousin who was Noel's double.

She gave one swift look at Dickon and thought:

"I must see him again. I must hear him sing to me . . . I couldn't just go away and not see him any more."

"May I take you back to your hotel, or wherever you are?" Dickon suggested.

"We're staying at Santa Clara."

"Paradise."

"I called it that."

"And this place, Villa Rosa, is almost as lovely."

"We—Ralph and I—have come here for our honeymoon ." Karey spoke the words more bravely. "It is so strange to have met you here."

Dickon felt definitely resentful of the fact that she was on her honeymoon. He knew, before he met Ralph Chesney, that he was not going to like him. And simultaneously came the thought:

"I've no earthly right to be resentful."

Looking down at Karey, he said:

"I am going to be married, Karey—quite soon. I'm engaged—to a girl I met on the boat coming back from Australia. Her name is Olive . . . Olive Graham. She isn't a Colonial—she was just visiting relatives in Sydney. She lives with her people in Surrey. You must meet her some day."

"Of course," said Karey.

But she could not altogether stamp on the queer feeling of regret that there was a woman in Dickon's life—a woman that he was going to marry. It seemed so odd, that this man should look at her with Noel's eyes and tell her in Noel's voice that he was going to marry somebody named "Olive."

"Of course, I'm mad," she thought. "The whole afternoon has been crazy. I must pull myself together."

She said aloud:

"Tell me more about your fiancée."

"One day, yes," said Dickon vaguely.

But he had nothing much to say. It would be quite impossible for him to tell the truth. And the truth was that he had drifted into that engagement with Olive which had been born of a glamorous moment on board ship in the tropics. Hundreds of engagements happen that way. And almost as soon as he had got home, he had regretted it, because Olive had nothing particularly in common with him. She was just a good-looking, amiable girl of a healthy, sporting type—and deeply in love with him. And for the latter reason he could not go back on his contract. But she was interested in all the things that meant nothing to him. Golf, tennis, hunting. She lived in the country, surrounded by dogs and horses.

She liked to listen to his music, but she was not at all stirred by it. That was not her fault. She just was not born musical. She could not tell whether he played the right note or the wrong one.

How could he, after such an engagement, judge Karey for what she had done? Who could ever account for the vagaries of human nature? Life was full of pitfalls into which one fell in the blind impulse of an hour.

He, Dickon Farringham, was going to marry Olive. Yet . . . this brief hour with Karey had shown him the one woman in the world whom he might really have loved—in the way that Noel had loved her.

He mentally shook himself and turned away from Karey.

"Come in and get your hat," he said in a curiously detached voice, "then I'll walk with you back to Santa Clara."

VI

Karey and Dickon walked through the archway into the Cuartel.

"This old garrison is *the* big attraction in Torremolinos," said Dickon, looking around him, his face vivid with appreciation; "the next time I come out here I shall not live in solitary state in Villa Rosa. I shall have one of these flats."

"They're not luxurious, but what does that matter?" said Karey.

"It's all old and beautiful and unspoiled. There lies the enchantment."

"With all this sunlight and beauty, who needs hot and cold basins and lifts and civilisation? Imagine the desecration if somebody bought up the place and turned it into a commercial enterprise with placards and shops and bathing-huts and the rest."

Karey laughed. It was the first time for a very long while that she had laughed aloud, spontaneously, like that. Dickon's views corresponded with her own. She could not help remembering Ralph wanted the luxury and the civilisation. Torremolinos and Santa Clara—they called it the *Castillo del Ingles* out here—had not cast its spell upon him as it had done upon her and Dickon. In these little ways he was Noel over again. Every moment that went by impressed that fact upon her more acutely.

She paused by the little white stone staircase which led up to the balcony of her flat.

"If you'll wait one moment, I'll call my husband."

"Right," said Dickon.

But some of the animation left his face as he turned it towards the white terrace at the other side of the Cuartel. His dark level brows drew together in a frown. Karey's husband! What manner of man would he be? He was a doctor. Dickon liked doctors on the whole. But he wondered if he was going to like the one who had stepped into the place which should have been Noel's?

In the little sitting-room Karey found Ralph leaning with his arms on the window-sill staring down at the fishermen's beach. The face he turned to her wore that sulky look which was becoming familiar.

"Hullo," he said in a grudging voice, "where on earth have you been?"

"I went out for a walk, Ralph."

"Why didn't you wait for me?"

"You were asleep, my dear, and you know I can never sleep in the daytime. I wanted some exercise."

His gaze travelled over her. That walk from Villa Rosa in the sunshine had restored her poise, her control, but her eyes were heavy and her face looked curiously drawn. Ralph noticed it.

"Your exercise doesn't seem to have done you any good," he said, "you look rotten. You haven't been foolish enough to take your hat off, have you, my dear? I warned you about sunstroke."

Her face flooded with colour and she turned from him.

"No, I didn't take my hat off. And I don't feel rotten. I'm quite all right."

"Where did you go?"

"A little way out of the village up the mountains. As a matter of fact, I—it's most extraordinary—I looked over a villa which I thought deserted and I—I actually found a first cousin of Noel's there—Dickon Farringham."

Chesney, who had been just about to pull his pipe from his pocket, paused in the act and stared at her.

"Dickon *Farringham*? Never heard of him. Who is he?"

"A first cousin of Noel's," she repeated. "He walked back with me—he's downstairs—you must come and be introduced."

"But what on earth is he doing out here?"

Karey explained. But she was careful to say nothing about the shock she had sustained when she had first set eyes upon Dickon. Neither did she mention her fainting fit and she had cautioned Dickon to say nothing. She knew it would only upset Ralph, and she saw no reason in hurting him gratuitously. She was married to him now, and it would cause him unnecessary distress if he thought that all her old love for Noel had surged back at the sight and sound of the man who resembled him so amazingly.

Ralph followed her down the stone staircase, none too pleased with life. Karey seemed casual enough about the affair, but Ralph was not entirely deceived. The last thing he wanted was for Karey to come in contact with anything or anybody which might reopen the past. He had hoped and believed that she had firmly put it behind her when they came to Spain for their honeymoon. It was damned annoying, in his opinion, that Noel's cousin should be taking a holiday in this very spot.

Ralph, himself, received something of a shock when he saw the young man with the slim, graceful figure and smooth black head who stood down in the Cuartel, smoking a cigarette, waiting for them.

"Good Lord," he muttered, "he's the image of Noel."

"Yes," said Karey breathlessly.

As Ralph approached, Dickon threw away his cigarette and held out a hand.

"How do you do, Doctor Chesney," he said. "Curious thing, running into your wife like this."

"How d'you do," said Ralph. "Yes, most odd finding you in Torremolinos. Of course I knew your cousin quite well."

Karey stood by, conscious of the peculiarity of the situation. The very way in which Dickon held out a hand and greeted Ralph was all too reminiscent of Noel. And she could see that Ralph was struck by the resemblance. Their greetings exchanged, the two

men were silent and both seemed a trifle embarrassed. Karey came to the rescue.

"Shall we all go up to Santa Clara for tea?"

"Thanks very much, but I think I'll get back home, if you don't mind," said Dickon.

"Oh, but you must have a drink—after that hot walk——" began Karey.

"Yes, do, of course," put in Ralph, mindful of his manners. But he was thinking: "I hope to God this fellow isn't going to hang around. I never saw a more striking resemblance. They might have been twins. It's bound to have an effect on Karey –"

And Dickon, quick to sum up a character at a glance, looked at the big, fair, ruddy-faced doctor and wondered why Karey had married him. He looked a thoroughly nice, healthy fellow who had, no doubt, plenty of brains for his own job, but he was utterly dissimilar from Noel . . . and not what Dickon would have thought the type to satisfy Karey.

Dickon was swift, too, to see that he was not wanted here. Of course—they were on their honeymoon—Dr. Chesney, if not Karey, would naturally not welcome any intrusion from an outsider. Dickon felt that he and Karey had known each other for a long time. Sympathy had flown quickly and surely between them. But he and Dr. Chesney were strangers.

It was this feeling which made Dickon reject the invitation to tea, despite the appeal in Karey's beautiful eyes.

"I must get back, thanks all the same," he said, and invented some excuse about a telephone call which he was expecting from England.

"Sorry you can't stay. Wait a second—I'll just fetch my hat," said Ralph, more jovially now that he saw that young Farringham had no intention of remaining; "Karey and I'll walk with you to the gate."

Karey, left alone with Dickon, looked at him mutely. She wanted him to stay to tea. In a curious way she welcomed the very pain of looking upon those features which were Noel's and of listening to that voice which brought back a thousand poignant, cherished memories.

A wave of depression came over her at the thought that he was going away and that he might not come back. She did not want to feel that they had only just met and formed a friendship which must end abruptly on account of her marriage.

Dickon turned his gaze to her, and his own heart was curiously heavy.

"She isn't happy with that fellow. Not really happy. He got her on the rebound. It so often happens. Poor, lovely child!"

Then Karey said:

"You will –you will come and lunch with us or—or dine—or something, quite soon, won't you?"

"It's awfully nice of you, Karey. But I oughtn't to intrude—I mean—this is your honeymoon ——"

"Oh, we're quite a modern couple—and you wouldn't be intruding," she said with pain naked in her eyes.

"I'd like to ask you to come up to Villa Rosa and play my piano——"

"Then please do."

"But, your husband——"

"Perhaps he'll come, too."

"Please, of course."

"Or I might take another walk by myself ——"

"And look over the deserted villa?" he suggested with his quick, brilliant smile.

That smile made her heart turn over within her. It was all she could do then not to burst out crying again and say:

"You *are* Noel my Noel!—you must be! Take me back to Villa Rosa now—I'll play for you and you must sing to me. It will be like old days——"

But she said nothing, only choked back the wild impulse and stood there, her fair head in the big yellow linen hat slightly bowed, her trembling hands clenched.

Dickon saw her emotion and looked grimly away from her up at a green palm which was spread like a giant fan against the cobalt sky. He thought:

"It is ridiculous. I've never felt like this in my life before. But I want to pick her up in my arms and carry her away. I know I could make her smile again. I can't bear to see her suffer like this. It's Noel she wants, but *I* could help her! God, why didn't we meet before!——"

The same cry echoed desolately through Karey's heart when finally the three of them walked to the gateway which led from Santa Clara into the village. Karey, between the two men; Ralph on her right, with his rather important, solid stride; Dickon, light-footed and preoccupied. She knew, intuitively, that she could not possibly have pledged herself for ever to poor Ralph if she had known that Dickon . . . the Dickon whom Noel had loved and was so like him . . . was coming into her life.

At the same time she remembered that Dickon was, in any case,

remote from her. There was his future wife in the background. This swift devastating attraction between them meant nothing . . . could mean nothing. It was just that they had both loved Noel and instinctively liked each other.

Dickon held Karey's hand for the fraction of a moment.

"Good-bye, Karey."

Ralph, standing by, thought:

"Infernal cheek, calling her by her Christian name if they didn't know each other before."

"Good-bye, Dickon," said Karey.

"*Hasta la vista,*" added Dickon.

"That being the Spanish for 'Good-bye until we meet again,'" said Karey with the ghost of a smile, "I do know that much. Do you speak Spanish fluently?"

"By no means, but I've studied it a little since I've been out here."

Deliberately he turned his gaze from the lovely, wistful face of the girl to the big man who stood beside her.

"Fine country, isn't it, Doctor Chesney?"

"Not bad," said Ralph, "bit too behind the times for me."

"Ah, well," said Dickon vaguely, "good-bye."

He gave another swift glance at Karey, who returned it in silence. He saw that her under lip was quivering. He walked up the hill at a great pace, careless of the heat. For no particular reason he felt out of tune with life and himself and everything else His strange, dramatic meeting with Karey had been most disturbing, and he found it difficult to leave her.

Karey and her husband walked back to the villa and sat on the veranda where tea was served to them. Neither of them mentioned Dickon Farringham again that day. Karey was particularly cheerful, ready to fall in with Ralph's plans when he suggested that they should play tennis with a Colonel and his wife who were also staying at Santa Clara. They played doubles until Karey was too exhausted to go on. Then she left Ralph to have a single with the Colonel, went down to the Quartel and up to her room.

She took off her dress, put on a wrapper and lay on her bed, with closed eyes. Her head ached violently. The whole of the afternoon had been one long strain. She kept thinking of Noel's cousin who was up there alone in that mountain villa; of his piano, his music, and the queer, strong impulse which moved her to go to him . . . join him there. Of course she could not, must not go; but she wanted to, with all her heart.

She opened her eyes and stared blindly in front of her. She

thought of Joan, her friend; of the day when they had talked together and Joan had said: *"There could never be another John for me and you could never meet another Noel. If one did, of course one would go crazy. Just imagine how marvellous it would be to meet the replica of the man one adored . . ."*

Joan's words kept reiterating through Karey's brain. She shivered and stretched her arms above her head.

"If one did . . . *one would go crazy,*" she whispered to herself. "And it's happened to me. Heavens, what a disaster!"

A disaster, because of Ralph. In England, in the old home, she had had nobody but Ralph to lean upon. He had seemed to her the only person who could take care of her and help her to wipe out that past which had belonged to Noel.

The meeting with Dickon Farringham had swept her back to that old life in one sweet, blinding flash. He was going to marry a girl called Olive Graham and no doubt he loved her. She, Karey, could mean nothing . . . no more than a girl whom his cousin had loved and for whom he was very sorry. But how tender, how understanding he had been! She remembered the aching comfort of his hands upon her hair and the fleeting kiss he had laid upon her head.

She turned her face to the pillow with a deep, painful sigh.

Why had it happened? Why should it ever have happened. She had hoped to be happy with Ralph. Just for a few days she had deceived herself into believing that she had done the right thing when she had married him. But now there was no hope of real happiness. This was the most cruel thing that Fate could have done to her. Must she be made to suffer all over again?

Ralph came in, noisily, as usual, red and perspiring after his strenuous game. He put down his racket and approached his wife's bed.

"Well, darling. How goes it?"

"Fine, thanks," said Karey brightly.

"That's good," he said and yawned. "I'm all for another piece of sleep before supper. Most exhausting, this heat."

"I should sleep, then."

"How about right here?" he suggested, touched her pillow and smiled at her. She smiled back, but her heart felt dead within her. Her eyes looked large and agonised. Ralph stared at her for a moment, then came and sat down on the bed and took her hand. He laid a professional finger on her pulse.

"You don't look very fit, darling. Haven't got a chill, have you? Pulse is a bit rapid."

"There's nothing wrong with me."

"Well, don't go taking walks at the hottest time of the day up into the mountains, silly child."

"No. I won't."

He got up, rubbed his face and hair vigorously with a towel, took off his damp shirt, and put on a dressing-gown. He came back and lay beside her.

She was so still that she might have been a lifeless statue, lying there with closed eyes and rigid limbs. He put an arm around her and pulled her towards him.

"Quite a jolly lot up there at the villa. I like that Colonel fellow. He and his family are building a house near Gib. His brother is an old Guy's man."

"Yes," said Karey under breath, still rigid.

"There's some talk about us joining up in a party to-morrow and going in to Malaga to a bull-fight."

"I don't want to go. I couldn't bear it. It's too horrible for those poor horses."

"It isn't really," argued Ralph. "It's quite interesting if you know the points of the fight."

"I don't want to go."

"Then I shan't."

"Why not? If Colonel and Mrs. Barr want you, why not join them?"

He kissed the cheek nearest him.

"I don't like leaving you behind. You're much too attractive."

She laughed weakly. She was so afraid that she was going to cry.

Whatever she did she must not let Ralph see how upset she was this evening. He would at once guess the reason. It might create a gulf between them which could never be bridged. There were gulfs enough already, she told herself wretchedly. Every hour of their intimate life together was showing her how divided they were in mind and heart.

"I do want to see a bull-fight," Ralph was saying. "But we'll talk about it to-morrow. I don't seem to have seen much of you to-day, darling. Love me?"

"Yes," she said, although that answer cost her all her strength.

He began to kiss her with passion, and for an instant her body remained stiff, resisting, its very rigidity resentful of his every caress. She wanted to cry out:

"No—go away—leave me alone—I can't belong to you any more —*I can't!*"

But she said nothing. She told herself that she had no right to make Ralph unhappy because of her own unhappiness. She tried not to remember anything . . . to abstract her mind completely. And Ralph did not seem to mind her lack of response so long as she lay there in his arms.

But she could not entirely eliminate the memory of that bitter-sweet hour with Dickon Farringham, and neither could she help that little thought which leapt to her brain:

"If Ralph goes to the bull-fight and leaves me here *I shall go up to Villa Rosa*. I must."

VII

At eleven o'clock on the following morning, Ralph went into Malaga with Colonel and Mrs. Barr and their daughter, Penelope. Ralph had been reluctant to leave his young wife, but his desire to see the bull-fight had overcome the reluctance.

Karey, left alone for the first time since her arrival at Santa Clara, stayed in bed for breakfast. She felt strangely tired after the emotional strain of yesterday.

Pura, the black-eyed, gay little Spanish maid who was never without a flower behind her ear, brought the Señora's coffee and rolls. When Karey had finished, she picked up a book that she had brought out with her from her library and tried to interest herself in it. After a while, however, she gave up the attempt to read and lay thinking, her hands clasped behind her head.

It was a relief, although she hated admitting it even to herself, to be left alone with the day in front of her and no Ralph to suggest plans and see that they were carried out. Inevitably her thoughts winged to Villa Rosa, to Dickon, and her strange desire to see him again. But she restrained the impulse to go to him. It would never do. It was sheer madness. He was much too much like Noel. But it was not left to her to make the first move. At half-past eleven Pura came running down to the Cuartel and called up:

"*Señora* . . . *Oiga* . . . telephone!"

Karey knew perfectly well that it must be Dickon who was telephoning, because it could be nobody else. Her heart beat faster and her face grew pink and warm. She sprang out of bed and changed, rapidly, into a pair of blue beach-pyjamas which had a sleeveless blouse of spotted silk and a spotted silk scarf to protect her neck from the sun. Like this she ran from the Cuartel, through the garden into the little sitting-room that contained the telephone. She spoke breathlessly:

"Hullo!"

"Is that you, Karey?"

Strange, sweet madness seized her at the sound of that voice: "*Is that you, Karey?*" . . . Dear God . . . it was Noel speaking to her through Dickon's lips. She answered:

"Yes . . . Dickon——"

"It's a wonderful day——"

"Marvellous."

"Not too hot for you?"

"It could never be too hot for me. I adore it."

"I want to ask you and your husband to come up to lunch with me."

"It's charming of you, but Ralph is in Malaga to-day. He and some people called Barr have gone in to lunch to see a bull-fight. I didn't go because I—would hate to see a bull-fight."

"I don't blame you," said Dickon, "I firmly refused to see one, myself."

She very nearly said: "Of course . . . I knew that——" because Dickon was Noel, living again, and Noel had been too tender-hearted, too fond of animals, to care for a display of wanton bloodshed and cruelty in a Spanish bull-ring.

Dickon's voice came again:

"Then you're all alone to-day?"

Karey caught a fold of her silk scarf and twisted it nervously round her fingers.

"Yes."

"What are you going to do?"

"I haven't thought. I'm only just up—I was lazy this morning—but I shall go down and bathe now, I think."

"May I come, too?"

"Yes," said Karey, because she could not possibly have answered "No."

"Are you sure——" he began.

"Yes, please," she said quickly.

"I'll get my things and come straight down," he said.

Karey hung up the receiver. She walked slowly back to the Cuartel, fair head bared to the sunshine, forgetful of Ralph's strict commands and all his lectures upon sunstroke. For a moment she stood on the terrace and looked down at the blue shimmer of sea and the mountain peaks behind Malaga which were scarcely visible to-day in the golden haze of heat.

Her heart was still beating very fast, and there was something vital, joyous, leaping in her blood. Something that had not existed since Noel died.

She kept telling herself that she was mad and bad, yes, absolutely wicked, to feel like this. What right had her blood to leap in her veins for Dickon Farringham? No right! But if it was wrong, it was madly sweet to feel so young, so thrilled again. Until now she had not been living. She had been dead . . . making the words of Noel's last song come true. But the thought of spending a few hours with Dickon, who was so like Noel, alone, in this heavenly place shook her to the very core. Somehow she could not settle down to rational thought; to the memory of Ralph, who was her husband and of the vows she had made to him a few weeks ago.

She half closed her eyes and whispered to herself: "I've suffered so much . . . even if it's wrong, I want to be happy just for a few brief hours!"

Dickon came. From the moment that Karey met him at the gates of Santa Clara there was no more Ralph and no thought of anything except the rapture of the memory of Noel; rapture that was pain; pain that was welcome because it was so sweet.

Dickon, with a Spanish fisherman's hat—wide straw brim and pointed crown, at a rakish angle on his dark smooth head; Dickon in grey flannels, with a short-sleeved white shirt, open at the throat, which so many Spaniards wore in this climate. Dickon with his trunks and towel in a roll under his arm, a cigarette between his lips, and sandals on his bare feet, looking as Noel would have looked—quite un-English as though born and bred under these blazing southern skies.

Karey's heart went out to him in a great rush when she saw him coming. She had a smile for him which seemed to him the most lovely thing on earth. Her voice shook a little as she said:

"Hullo, Dickon. *Buenos!*"

He swept off his hat and bowed to the ground.

"*Buenos, Señora.*"

"You might be a Spaniard," she laughed.

"I can't say the same of you——" His dark bright eyes regarded her eagerly.

She was altogether charming in those linen shorts of cornflower blue and white spotted blouse. She wore no hat, but had tied a scarf over her silver-fair head. He was struck afresh by the beauty of her face with its rather pointed chin, moulded cheek-bones, and wide, greeny-grey eyes with their tremendously long dark lashes. Her smooth bare arms and shoulders looked like pale polished bronze.

"I think you might be Scandinavian," said Dickon gravely.

"I'm really all-English."

"What is all English, anyhow? We're all mixtures."

"Well, perhaps I've got a Swedish grandmother and you have a Spanish grandfather," she smiled at him.

She was glowing and so much happier this morning! He found her enchanting. Yesterday, in his villa, tragic and weeping, she had moved him to the quick. But this Karey, whose red lips smiled and who looked young and vivacious and glad to be alive, he found devastating.

He had had a letter this morning from the girl whom he was going to marry. A typical letter from Olive, not very romantic, because she was not that kind; just friendly and affectionate and full of conversation about her new mare and the coming tennis season, and the local golf-championship which she was hoping to win.

The longer he was engaged to Olive the more dubious Dickon became about the wisdom of this marriage, which was going to take place in England at the end of the summer. Olive seemed happy about it, but how could it possibly be a success?

On board he had found Olive companionable. There had been a certain amount of physical appeal, too; all the glamour of starlit nights in the tropics to magnify it. He had really thought himself in love when he had asked Olive to marry him. But now he knew that he had never been in love.

He looked at Karey and with a pang remembered the other girl —tall, a little heavy, but good looking with her fine hazel eyes, brown bobbed hair and beautiful teeth. He was still very fond of her and horribly remorseful and ashamed because of his changed emotions. But she was no longer the woman he loved and wanted for his wife. The whole thing, born of a flirtation on board ship, was a disaster from his point of view. He could not help thinking, also, that it would be a disaster from Olive's side sooner or later, since he could not give her what she wanted.

Life was all wrong. Olive should be married to a man like Ralph. They would have made an excellent couple; both big, healthy, cheerful creatures devoted to sport.

But there was no room in his mind this morning for prolonged and gloomy reflections upon Olive, misplaced affections, and matrimonial mistakes. He was here with Karey . . . Noel's beautiful and adored Karey. Dickon had had so many letters from Noel, full of adoration for Karey. He was beginning to appreciate and understand it all, now that he actually knew her He could not be otherwise than content this morning. He was here, along with her in

the brilliant Andalusian Spring: he was going to make the best of what the gods offered.

"I've put my swim-suit on under my shorts," said Karey; "perhaps you'd like to go down to the flat and change?"

"Thanks, I will," he said.

Later, they walked down the narrow twisting path which led to the bathing beach, laughing and talking as though they had known each other all their lives. Karey pointed out the matchless blue of the wild flowers, and the scarlet of the poppies which starred the green bank on either side of them.

"Have you ever seen anything like the flowers in Spain?"

"I know," said Dickon, "and by the end of June they will have all gone and the countryside becomes a brown, baked desert. I believe it's unbearably hot in July and August."

"But this is perfect!"

Dickon looked around him, but his gaze came back to the delicious figure in cornflower blue walking sedately under her parasol in front of him. He said:

"Yes—this is perfect."

They reached the beach and found a corner by some rocks which they could have to themselves, and lay down on the warm, sun-baked sand. Karey had a basketful of oranges, small, thin-skinned fruit, sweet as sugar. She tossed a couple to Dickon.

"I buy these for next to nothing every morning from a little man who comes round with his donkey and sells oranges to everybody in the Cuartel."

"They look lovely," said Dickon.

She produced a bottle of coconut oil, smiling.

"And this is necessary, too. Let's uncork it and cover ourselves before we scorch."

They oiled themselves freely until they glistened in the strong sunlight. Side by side, they stretched themselves out under the blistering heat for a few moments without cover or caution. Both young and brown, slim and supple, beautifully made.

In his black trunks, with dark hair ruffled, Dickon looked to Karey like a boy—years and years younger than Ralph—although actually there was little difference in their ages.

They lay supine, sucking oranges like children, laughing and joking in the sunlight.

Finally, Karey felt her delicate skin beginning to scorch and put up her red sun-umbrella. Dickon came under it with her. The dark head drew close to the fair one. The conversation became more serious.

They talked of music; of songs; of German and Italian opera—of the opera that Dickon meant to write one day. He was delighted by Karey's knowledge of music and her sympathetic response to all that he had to say. They talked of Noel's compositions, and Karey, for the first time since Noel died, spoke of all the things which she had shut away in her heart and tried not to think about, and which she had vowed never to discuss again. To Dickon, she could speak of them.

"Have you heard that last song of Noel's—'Answer'?" she asked him.

"No," said Dickon. "He must have written it after I went abroad."

"It's very beautiful. You shall have a copy when I get back to England."

"If you can remember it by heart, play it to me here, can't you?"

"Yes, I'll try——"

"When will you come?"

"I don't know, Dickon."

"This afternoon?"

Karey, wide-eyed, looked up at her pink parasol. The sun burnt through it and cast a hot, roseate glow over her whole body. She was equally conscious of a strange, inner glow. She felt happy—happier than she had been for long months—happier than she had any right to be, listening to the stirring voice of the man who lay beside her on the warm sand.

"This afternoon, after lunch," said Dickon, "will you?"

"I don't know."

Dickon dug his fingers into the sand and sifted it thoughtfully.

"Would your husband object?"

She knew that the answer should be "Yes." Ralph would object because he was jealous; he had been jealous of Noel—even the dead Noel—so inevitably he would feel likewise about the living Dickon.

Karey thought:

"I suppose I ought to say no to Dickon and be absolutely loyal to Ralph. But I want to hear him sing and I want to play for him—*oh, God,* this is awful . . . devastating——"

"Modern husbands aren't jealous, are they?" Dickon spoke again.

"They aren't supposed to be," said Karey with a little laugh, "but I expect they are. Only they're ridiculed if they show it ——" Then her red under lip was thrust out mutinously and the old indepen-

dent Karey asserted herself: "I can do as I like. Of course I'll come. Why shouldn't I?"

Dickon drew a deep breath, shut his eyes, and clasped his hands behind his smooth black head.

"Why, indeed!" he murmured.

Silence. A warm, glowing silence between them. She stole a glance at him and felt an agony of pleasure at the mere sight of the familiar profile and the dense thickness of the lashes against the brown cheeks. Noel had had lashes like that. How often she had told him that they were wasted . . . much too good for a man! . . . and how often she had kissed them in a moment of adoration and he had laughed and called her sweet, foolish names.

She lay very still, but she felt her whole body trembling. Turning from the study of Dickon's face, she closed her own eyes while the sun warmed her oiled, glistening legs and the white thighs which were scarcely brown. She thought:

"I'm mad to think this way . . . quite mad I'm Ralph's wife, and there is a girl called Olive . . . Dickon's fiancée."

Then it was Dickon's turn to open his eyes and steal a glance at her. His thoughts were chaotic.

"How lovely and wonderful she is . . . I can understand why poor old Noel loved her, and I can't blame Chesney if he's jealous . . . so would I be, if she belonged to me . . . *if*——"

That set him trembling, too, and suddenly he could not bear that sweet, pregnant silence. He sat up and shook the sand from his fingers.

"Let's bathe, Karey."

She opened her eyes.

"Yes, I will, if you want to."

He sprang up and held out a hand.

"Come on."

"Wait—I must put on my cap."

She was fully conscious of his steady gaze while she fastened the white rubber cap and tucked in the fair, shining hair. Her heart beat absurdly fast. Without taking his outstretched hand, she gained her feet and ran in front of him down to the water's edge. He followed and quickly, as though terrified, she plunged into the water. It was ice-cold. At least it seemed so after the heat of the sun and the sand. The Spring was not yet far enough advanced for the Mediterranean to be warm. But Karey braced herself, dived head first through a wave and came up, her rubber-cap sparkling with water. She called, breathlessly:

"Come on, Dickon!"

He was still standing at the water's edge, hands crossed on his chest, shivering, and grimacing at her.

"Gosh—it's cold."

"Icy," she shouted, "but we'll feel wonderful when we get out. Come on, coward!"

He looked at the slim young figure in the royal blue swim-suit and admired the swift, clean strokes with which she cleft the water. Then he plunged in and swam up to her. Their faces were wet, tanned, glistening in the sun and gay with laughter. They were god and goddess of the sea, strong and lovely and happy. They came out, by mutual consent, after a brief swim. Following the electric shock of that first ice-cold plunge, it was glorious to stand in the blazing sunlight and feel their muscles relax and their bodies glow from head to foot.

Karey took off her cap and shook back her hair. It floated like a silver cloud to her shoulders. Dickon thought he had never seen anything so beautiful and she looked so absurdly young—a young, untouched girl. It was impossible to imagine her as Ralph Chesney's wife. Dickon had no wish to imagine her as any man's wife. He knew, while he stood there, watching her shake the moisture from her shining head, that he wanted her for himself—wanted her more than anything or anybody in the world.

He forced his gaze from her and groaned to himself:

"What is it? . . . I'm bewitched. . . . Is it the glamour of Spain . . . or her love for Noel which makes her so kind to me—or is it just Karey? It's all crazy, anyhow. I must take care of her, as well as myself——"

"That was lovely," said Karey joyously.

"Yes."

She glanced at him as they walked back to their place under the rocks. He looked gloomy and preoccupied.

"Didn't you enjoy it, Dickon?"

"Yes, thanks."

Her heart sank. Why this sudden curtness? This swift change from irresponsible gaiety to gloom? Dear heaven, but how like Noel, again. Noel, who had been a creature of moods not unusual in a man who is heart and soul a musician . . . sensitive . . . temperamental. But she wondered if Dickon was offended; if she had said or done anything that he disliked. Her own feeling of happiness died. Silently she lay down on the beach, panting after the exertion of the swim. Dickon threw her a towel.

"Better dry yourself. The salt water will make you scorch like mad."

She took the towel, gravely, and dried her legs and arms. He lit a cigarette and sat staring at the sea, then, in a deliberate way, he turned to her and began to talk about Ralph.

"Where does your husband practise?"

"He used to be my father's partner in Brentham, Sussex," said Karey, "but now he's setting up in Queen Anne Street."

"Is he a specialist?"

"Yes——"

She answered all his questions, baffled by the sudden change in his demeanour. Dickon appeared politely interested. But she felt that a chill had descended upon them, and that the beauty of the morning was clouding over. This was her honeymoon. She ought to like talking about Ralph. But she didn't. She wanted talk about Noel —or Dickon himself. At length she could no longer bear his stilted conventional conversation. She closed her parasol with a snap and gained her feet.

"I think I'll go in and get ready for lunch. It's nearly one."

He looked up at her. He saw that the radiance had left her face, and he knew exactly how she was feeling. He longed to catch her hand and pull her down beside him again and say :

"I don't care a damn what your husband does . . . just look at me . . . talk to me——"

But instead, he said :

"Right you are. I'll follow in about twenty minutes, shall I? And perhaps I might use Dr. Chesney's room for my own change."

"Yes, of course."

"I might as well walk up with you," he added, "I can wait on the terrace until you're ready."

In complete silence they walked along the beach and climbed the path which wound up the cliff to Santa Clara. Karey left Dickon outside the Cuartel and hurried up to her flat. Her thoughts were confused and miserable, for no particular reason, as she stripped off her bathing suit and washed away the sand and oil that clung to her body.

The first part of the morning had been so lovely, but she realised that something had passed through Dickon's mind which had spoiled their spontaneous, facile camaraderie. The thought of Ralph, perhaps. He had seemed to want to discuss Ralph for some purpose of his own. Purposely he had become conventional and chilling.

Karey's spirits were dead flat when she finished dressing and joined Dickon on the terrace. He sat on the balustrade, wrapped in

a towel, smoking; his brooding eyes were fixed on the sea. His resemblance to Noel gave her a fresh pang. Yet she felt, for the first time since they had met, that she was liking him for himself, and not only because of that kinship with her lost lover.

"You can use the flat now, Dickon," she said gently—so gently that the timbre of her voice made it impossible for him to keep up the atmosphere of conventionality which he had been trying to preserve, because he knew himself so vitally drawn to her.

He turned to her, flung away his cigarette end and gave her a swift, brilliant smile.

"How quick you've been, and how nice you look!"

Her whole being was suffused with that warm glow again. Her cheeks grew pink, her eyes were shining. She wore yellow, her favourite colour; the colour in which Dickon had first seen her up at the Villa Rosa. There was a striped yellow silk handkerchief knotted about her neck. So fair was her hair that it looked silver in contrast to that daffodil hue.

"I'm glad you think so," she said softly.

"I certainly do."

She gave a little laugh.

"You'd better hurry up. Andres has just sounded the gong. Shall I tell him to give us *malaga* to drink?"

"Always the *vin-du-pays*," he smiled. "Anything you like. And after lunch, Villa Rosa and some music."

"Yes," she said breathlessly.

She stood with a hand to her heart watching him walk away from her and disappear into her flat. Then she turned her face to the sea and whispered:

"*And after that*. . . . Ralph will come back from the bull-fight. . . . Oh, *God*, what am I going to do?"

CHAPTER THREE

I

In the long, cool music-room of Villa Rosa, Karey played the last song which Noel had written, and Dickon listened to it, standing just behind her, dark eyes gravely watching the slim white fingers which moved so expertly over the keys.

When she finished, she turned to him with inexpressible sadness written across the lovely face that had once been so gay, so happy this morning on the beach.

"Nice, isn't it, Dickon?"

"A lovely thing. Play it again, Karey."

"Give me a pencil and paper and I'll write you down the words first of all; then you shall sing it."

He brought a writing block and a pencil. She wrote the words down quickly and handed the paper back to him. He read through the poem. The melancholy of the words hurt and depressed him.

"It's too sad, Karey. Why did he choose such words just before his death?"

"I don't know. That was so strange."

"He had a melancholy streak, poor old boy."

"Haven't you got it, too?"

"Not so pronounced."

She sighed and began to play the melody again.

"Sing it with me, Dickon."

He did as she asked, softly, correcting a note here and there when he went wrong. Karey's heart ached for an old sorrow and a new sweetness while she listened. It was Noel singing again, standing just behind her as Noel had stood. When Dickon came to that last line, "I shall not die, I shall be dead," her eyes were bright and tearless, but her lips were quivering. She shook her head dumbly and let her hands fall to her lap. Dickon said:

"It's a haunting thing You must send me a copy, but now let's have something gay. It only makes you unhappy—and I can't bear to see you like that."

She looked up with a swift smile.

"I'm all right. I'm quite happy—extraordinarily so. It's wonderful to sit here and play again—it's like old days—unbelievably good."

"We'll have some Elizabethan songs."

He pulled more music from a cabinet and brought it across to the piano. Karey played snatches of opera, of melodies that she loved, while Dickon sorted his songs. Now and then he hummed or sang a phrase with her, and his quick smile caught at her heart-strings, because he was Noel living again.

Dickon looked young and happy in his grey flannels—and unusually tidy. He was wearing a coat and collar and tie, in honour of her visit, he had said, when they reached the Villa after their lunch at Santa Clara.

He pulled out the book that he wanted and brought it to her.

"Let's have these."

"I know them well. But you play your own accompaniments——"

"Only because I've never struck anybody who could play for me like you do."

"But I want to hear you play."

"Afterwards——"

"Did Luccesi train your voice?"

"Yes. Noel and I both went to him."

"I thought so. He's a fine teacher. He's produced both your voices in the same way."

She began to play the song he had chosen and Dickon sang it. His fine baritone filled the room. Every note seemed to fill a void in Karey's heart and supply a need which she had felt unconsciously ever since she had abandoned her music. She played joyously and well.

When he finished, her eyes were shining and her face was warm and pink.

"That was marvellous."

"You played it perfectly."

"No—I'm out of practice."

"Then you must be utter perfection when you're in practice."

They smiled into each other's eyes. Dickon wiped his face with a silk handkerchief.

"It's hot!"

"But I'm not going to let you rest. You must sing again."

"Cruel creature—can't I even have a drink?"

"Not yet," she laughed.

So he sang again and again, to please her and himself. They went through most of the songs he loved and which she knew. And some which she had never heard before. And when at length Dickon protested that he could sing no more until he had had a drink, Karey rose from the piano with a long sigh.

"I can't tell you how I've enjoyed it."

He looked at the lovely, graceful figure in the daffodil gown and felt the blood leap in his veins for gladness because she was here, and this sweet golden afternoon of the Spanish spring was theirs; whatever happened afterwards, nothing could take the memory of this from him.

"I've loved every minute of it. Noel was right when he called you the perfect accompanist."

"I don't know so much. My fingers really are a little stiff. I used to play quite difficult things for Noel."

They walked out on to the veranda, talking of the dead man whom they had both loved. Karey suddenly found that she could speak to Dickon of Noel without pain—or if pain there was, Dickon counteracted it.

They sat together in long chairs with cushions behind their backs and talked of many things. Talked until the shadows lengthened and the heat of the day grew less and the afternoon waned. Below the white terrace the sea was deep violet, with scarcely a ripple on it. The mountains behind Malaga were so clear-cut that they looked like dark-blue stones outlined against the paler sky.

The name of Ralph Chesney was not mentioned between them, and neither did Dickon speak of the girl whom he was going to marry. There were so many other things to talk about; so much that they had in common; so much they both loved and could discuss and mutually appreciate.

Until old José, the Spaniard who looked after Dickon, brought tea out to them, Karey had no thought of time. She had just sat there, dreaming away the hours. A haze of content had settled over her and she basked in it. It was mental sunshine, healing her bruised spirit.

She came back to earth, looked at her watch and saw that it was half-past four.

"Heavens, how the time has flown! I must go back."

"Oh no, please," said Dickon anxiously, "you must have tea with me."

She stood up.

"But Ralph will be back."

Dickon's face clouded. Ralph had been forgotten—so far as he was concerned, neither did he wish to remember the doctor whom Karey had married.

"What time do you expect him?"

"I don't really know. He didn't know himself. After the bull-

fight he was going with the Barrs to look over those lovely gardens of the Conceptione."

"Then he won't be back yet. Stay to tea, Karey, do."

Her heart-beats quickened as she looked down at the brown, pleading face. It was difficult to resist Dickon. And she did not want to go. She had been so happy. Her throat felt constricted at the very memory of Ralph and the irreparable blunder which she had made in marrying him. Why, why hadn't she known that this was going to happen to her, known that Dickon was in the world? He had brought peace and happiness back to her; a peace that she had never expected to know again. Ralph's friendship and devotion had been an anodyne; but Dickon was teaching her to live again in the full sense of the word.

She sat down in her chair.

"I'll stay," she said breathlessly.

Again the memory of Ralph was dismissed. They drank their tea and ate the little sandwiches which Maria had sent out, and ripe yellow loquads, a Spanish fruit which Karey had never seen and to which Dickon introduced her.

When they had finished, they went back into the music room. Karey induced Dickon to play for her His touch was sympathetic, and although his technique was not as good as Karey's, he improvised well and she was charmed with what he played.

Instinctively, when she looked at him, there came the thought:

"This is perfect companionship. . . . Ralph and I could never know it in a thousand years. I was mad to imagine that I could put music out of my life just because my poor Noel died. . . ."

Dickon began to sing something that he was playing. She listened to the stirring voice, her large eyes looking blindly past that dark, familiar head. When he broke off, she cried:

"Go on . . . that's one of Schumann's. . . . I love it."

He finished the song, smiling at her He, too, found this companionship amazingly sweet and exciting. He, too, thought of the lack of it which must face him in the future. Olive would not have known whether it was Schumann or Chopin that he played, and neither would she have minded very much. And he, too, was filled with queer rebellion against the perversity of the fates who ordained these things. It almost seemed that the gods were jealous of mortal happiness, ready to snatch it away as soon as it came.

He played on for a while, and when he looked up at Karey again he saw tears in Karey's eyes—the first that she had shed to-day. The sight of them completely unnerved him. He sprang up from the music stool, came up to her and took her hands in his.

"You mustn't be sad, my dear. I can't allow you to be sad here, with me. You have had enough——"

Unconsciously her fingers clung to the warm brown hands. She whispered:

"Too much."

"You mustn't cry."

The old, familiar words that wrenched her heart in two. She swallowed the sob that tore at her throat and tried to smile at him.

"I've been so happy up here . . . you don't know what it's meant to me."

He went on holding her fingers so hard that it hurt her. His face looked queer and set.

"I know what it's meant to *me*, Karey. We must see a lot of each other -you must come here often."

"But I won't be able to——"

"You can't tell me that this is the last time we shall have music together."

She began to tremble as though with cold and yet the sun was still hot and the Spring day had not yet reached its end.

"It won't be easy to come, Dickon. I'm not exactly—free."

"But you're a modern woman, Karey. Surely you'll choose and make your own friends."

"It won't be easy," she repeated.

"Is the doctor such a tyrant?"

"He's—he's a dear," she said loyally, "but—oh, I can't explain——"

"He won't want you to be friends with me, in particular, you mean. Because I'm Noel's cousin."

"Because you're so like him—maybe."

"I suppose he's right—psychologically sound." Dickon gave a queer, short laugh. Karey looked at him, mute and wide-eyed, but her fingers went on clinging to his as though she were drowning and she believed that only those brown, sensitive hands of his could draw her out of the waters that closed over her head.

"I suppose so," she said miserably.

"But we can't have met as we did just for nothing, just to go our own ways like strangers."

Then Karey tore her fingers away from his. Her face was white under the tan.

"I'd better go home."

"Karey——"

"Don't you think I'd better?" she interrupted piteously. "This is so—foolish—Dickon."

"Don't you want to stay?"

"You know I do. But you've said, yourself, that Ralph is psychologically right."

"Yes," said Dickon.

"And somebody else might object to our friendship, too. Your fiancée."

"Oh, *God*!" said Dickon in a savage undertone.

Karey felt sudden acute terror sweeping over her. Fear of Dickon; of herself, because she trembled so at his touch and shrank so completely from the very thought of ending the sweetness of this afternoon.

For a moment of painful illusion, it seemed to her that Noel was standing here in front of her; she was panic-stricken at the mere idea of doing anything to distress him, of going any way save his.

"Oh, Dickon!" she said in a hurt, small voice.

He looked at her intently. Then suddenly lost control and caught her close, held her for a breathless instant against him, and kissed her twice, lingeringly on the lips. Then without speaking, he let her go.

"I'll take you back to Santa Clara," he said in a suffocated voice.

Speechlessly she looked at him. Every nerve in her body quivered. Her face was suffused with colour to the roots of the fair, shining hair. She shook so that she could scarcely stand. But Dickon, without looking at her again, walked out of the room. She picked up the yellow straw hat which lay on the piano, and followed him, walking like one in a dream.

II

They did not speak to each other until they were half-way down the mountain side and had almost reached the white Malaga road. Then Dickon, looking straight ahead, said:

"I suppose I ought to apologise for what happened—just now ——"

At once the red blood rushed to Karey's cheeks and stayed there. Her hand went up to her throat.

"Please—no!"

"But I owe you an apology."

"No, it was my fault, too."

"I had no earthly right——"

"That doesn't count," she broke in; "neither of us had any right to be as happy as we were this afternoon, but how can one fight

against so strong a destiny? Anyhow, please Dickon, don't let's spoil it by qualifying it with an apology or an excuse."

The pain in his eyes melted and he turned to her with his swift smile.

"What a dear, sweet thing you are, Karey."

"I'm not."

"You are and I know it to my cost. I'm going to be terribly frank, although I have no right even to be that! I fell in love with you, Karey, right from the moment that I walked into my music-room and saw you sitting there at the piano looking at me with those wide eyes. And when you fainted in my arms, calling Noel's name, I realised I was holding the one and only woman in the world for me. Things do happen like that sometimes—suddenly—in a flash. As you say, it's too strong a destiny for one to fight against entirely. And every road I've ever walked seems to have led me towards you."

Karey stood still. It was as though she could no longer walk because she was trembling so. Her heart was beating to a glad, mad tune in a way that it had not beaten since that first, dear, dead lover had said such things to her as Dickon was saying now.

She turned to him with a piteous look in her eyes and said:

"Don't—don't, Dickon. I can't bear it."

He gave a short laugh.

"A few days—a few hours—and before that I only knew of you as the Karey who belonged to somebody else. And now you mean *this*——"

"Don't!" she repeated in a suffocated voice.

"Does it mean something to you, too?"

"I don't want to tell you. I *mustn't* tell you. Don't you understand that I'm—I'm married, to Ralph?"

That pulled him up. The fire and passion in his eyes died down. He turned from the ravishing picture of the fair, shining head and the lovely face beside him and looked blindly down the rough road beside which the cacti raised their green and dusty spikes and the anchusa burned bluer than the blue sky. An old man came along on a donkey, chewing a piece of sugar-cane, and nodded at the couple.

"*Buenas!*"

"*Buenas tardes,*" Dickon answered mechanically.

The little donkey passed by, clip-clopping, climbing patiently upwards with his heavy load. Dickon moved on.

"Come along," he said almost roughly.

Karey went with him. Her throat felt dry and her head was

swimming. She felt that she was in chaos—sudden chaos which Dickon's words had stirred in her; which his voice, his touch, and above all those two fierce kisses had roused in her up at Villa Rosa. She thought:

"Oh, God, why has this happened? He asks me if it means something to me—it means too much and could mean so much more if I let it. But I mustn't. I must put him out of my mind and out of my life, quickly, before anything disastrous happens to us both."

They walked on in silence, both strung to concert pitch. It seemed that neither of them dared speak nor look at each other again. Karey felt an uncontrollable desire to stop him, to turn her face to him and say:

"Dickon—Dickon, who is my Noel living again—*love me!* You must—it's inevitable—predestined! Dickon, I will love you, too—a new love growing out of the old. . . ."

But she stayed mute and walked along the road in the dying sunshine like one in a dream, saying and doing none of the things that were bubbling up and overflowing in her heart.

Almost with relief she reached the gates of Santa Clara and stopped to say good-bye.

"Don't come any farther, Dickon. Thank you—just thank you for our afternoon—for our whole day."

His young brown face was set as he looked down at her.

"You have nothing to thank me for, but I have to thank you for so much."

"Good-bye," she said under her breath.

He took her hand and clung to it for a moment like a dying man. Then without another word he turned and walked away from her. She did not look after him because she dared not. She went straight down the path past the brilliant border of scarlet geraniums and into the white Cuartel.

It was only when she reached the steps leading up to the balcony of her flat that she became wholly conscious of the fact that something terrific had happened to her to-day—something which meant everything and yet must mean nothing. The strong, subtle, dangerous attraction which had sprung to life like a white flame between Dickon and herself was doomed to immediate death. It was utterly hopeless from the very start. But she knew, indubitably, that Dickon was the man who should have taken Noel's place in her heart and her life. Noel, living again in Dickon, should have been hers; could have magically mended all the broken pieces of her life.

She had married Ralph. And this was her honeymoon, this holi-

day in Spain. She must have been mad—she *had* been mad. Nothing had seemed to matter—even marriage at home in England. She had been dead. But Dickon, who was affianced to another woman, made her live again and taught her that everything mattered, vitally, terrifyingly.

She felt physically sick as she climbed the stairs. It was more than a relief to find the flat empty. Ralph had not yet come back. She sat down on the edge of her bed and stared, hopelessly, at the red stone floor. Outside she could hear the screaming of the swifts, circling madly round the Cuartel, which was their habit before they sought their nests in the eaves for the night.

The shrill crying of the birds seemed to pursue her ears until she could no longer bear the noise. She put her hands up to her ears, and sat like that, huddled, thinking chaotically.

Dickon, who had kissed her lips as Noel had kissed them and looked at her with Noel's eyes and sung to her with Noel's voice; that same Dickon was walking away from her at this very moment and she might never see him again. Neither of them had suggested a further meeting. Neither of them had dared. Was this going to be the end of it all? Just this one golden day; that one intensely sweet moment of revelation between them? Oh, intolerable thought!

Footsteps on the stone staircase. Heavy, self-confident steps. Ralph was coming back. Ralph, whom she had married and to whom she belonged, and from whom she was farther in spirit than the farthest star.

She stood up and with a nervous gesture pushed a wave of hair back from her hot forehead. She summoned all her self-control to meet him without betraying the inward chaos which tormented her.

Ralph came into the little sitting-room, wiping his forehead and neck with a handkerchief.

"Phew!" he grinned when he saw the slim figure in the yellow dress and held out a hand: "So there you are, darling. All right? We've just got back. Had a wonderful time. Wouldn't have missed it for anything, although I had it on my conscience leaving you all alone for the day."

Karey looked at him without speaking. Heaven alone knew what she had on her conscience, she thought. Yet she was unashamed of her feelings for Dickon, just as she had never been ashamed of loving Noel.

"Gad, that bull-fight was a stunning show, Karey," continued Ralph, stuffing his handkerchief back in his pocket. "A bit odoriferous—all the blood and that—and Colonel Barr, who's seen

one of the big shows in Madrid, said that the matadors were rotten here. But I enjoyed it. It's a wonder to me those fellows aren't more often killed. One's sympathies are rather with the bull."

Karey felt sick again. She stared blindly at her husband's red hot face. She thought of him gloating over the wanton cruelty of a bull being tortured by mankind and of gentle worn-out horses in gawdy trappings, spurred on to an agonising death for the glory of the matadors. She thought, also, of Dickon, gentle and sensitive, sitting at his piano, playing to her. Dickon, who, like herself, never wished to see a bull fight while he was in Spain.

Chesney suddenly became aware of the strangeness in his young wife's attitude, and the pallor of her face despite its tan. He took her hands.

"Hullo, what's wrong? Why are you looking like this, old girl? Not feeling seedy, are you?"

She pulled herself together and smiled.

"Oh no—not at all. I was just listening to you. I'm so—so glad you enjoyed it all. But the very idea of a bull-fight sickens me."

"Oh, well, you're a woman," said Ralph in a superior voice. "Men are differently built, my dear Not that there weren't a good sprinkling of women at that fight."

Karey made an effort to talk brightly.

"Did Mrs. Barr and Penelope go?"

'No, we left them at the local cinema. Nice child, Penelope. The Colonel is buying her a donkey and she's going to keep it here. Shall I buy my little Karey one?"

"Yes, if you like," she laughed helplessly.

He pulled the lobe of her ear in a jocular way. She set her teeth and endured it But she felt that Ralph in this mood made her want to scream. She longed to be alone, since she could not, must not, be with Dickon. And by her own wish, her own will, she had banished herself from peace and solitude and given herself to this man. Oh, she knew now that she had been mad, *mad*.

Ralph pulled her into his arms and kissed her. Her eyes closed to shut out the sight of that face, handsome enough, amiable, eager for her. And she thought:

"How am I going to go on with this . . "

Ralph satisfied himself with a kiss or two, then let her go and began to take off his coat and collar and tie.

"I must go up to the villa for a bath. I'm hot and dusty "

"I'll have one after you."

'Right ho, darling. By the way, how have you been amusing yourself all day?"

"I bathed this morning and—and Dickon came to lunch."

Ralph whipped off his tie and turned to her sharply, the amiability leaving his face.

"Oh, did he? Who asked him?"

"I did," said Karey, and doubled her hands. Her palms felt wet and she was shaking with nerves. But she tried to speak naturally: "He rang up and asked us both to lunch with him, and I said that we couldn't because you were in Malaga, so—he came down here."

Ralph went on with his undressing.

"I see."

"You don't mind, do you, Ralph?" said Karey. "I mean—we aren't going to be the sort of married couple who don't allow each other to have their own particular friends."

"Has Mr. Dickon, or whatever you call him, become your particular friend since yesterday?"

She moistened her lips with the tip of her tongue. The pupils of her eyes were dilated. But she laughed.

"He's Noel's cousin, you know. Hardly a stranger."

"Well, I don't know that I want you to see too much of him."

She turned from him because she felt the furious colour scorch her face. Ralph was jealous—palpably jealous. Jealousy was a sign of possessiveness in a man. Oh, God, how was she to treat it? She resented it, because she did not love him. But if she valued their future happiness she must be gentle and understanding with Ralph and keep an iron hand on her own emotions and desires. After all, he had every right to be jealous, and she had no earthly right to resent it. She must keep on reminding herself that this was her honeymoon, and that she was crazy to feel, to act like this.

Yet when she looked into Ralph's blue, rather sullen eyes, she was conscious of the wall that had sprung up between them in a single night—and during the few hours that had elapsed since her meeting with Dickon—a barrier which she would not find it easy to break. But it was certain that something was gone for ever . . . even that little, momentary thrill that had been hers when she had set out for Spain with Ralph's ring on her finger. Dead and gone. So weak had it been that it had scarcely drawn breath 'ere it expired. And so strong the old tearing passion for Noel, that nothing had ever killed it. It was burning up again -as fiercely as ever—for Dickon.

"What can I do?" she asked herself and found no answer. She laid a hand on Ralph's shoulder and looked up at him with an infinitely wistful light in her large eyes and said:

"Don't be jealous, Ralph. I couldn't bear it. We mustn't start our married life like this. I've always been independent and so have you. Let's stay so and choose our own friends."

"Jealous? Why should I be?" he retorted, stiffening under her touch. His face looked red and angry. "It's preposterous of you to suggest it."

"Then why mind if I see something of Noel's cousin?"

"I want you for myself. After all, we're on our honeymoon. . . . Oh, I know I left you to-day, but you swore you didn't mind ——"

"Neither did I. Ralph, don't let's go on with this conversation. It's all so unnecessary."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"All right. But you needn't insinuate that I'm jealous. You're my wife, and I don't presume that this fellow can ever be more than a stranger to you, whether he's Noel's cousin or not."

"Very well," said Karey.

Her hand dropped from his shoulder and she turned away. Ralph immediately followed her. He caught her and drew her against him.

"What the devil's all the argument about, anyhow? You can be friends with who the devil you like. But you're my wife, aren't you?"

"Yes," she said, and pressed her face against his shoulder so that he could not see into her eyes.

"And you love me, don't you?"

"Yes," she said. "But, Ralph, you knew when we married that I—I wasn't in love in the way that you are."

"I told you I'd teach you to be. I *am* teaching you, aren't I?"

She made no answer, but out of pity, and in gratitude because he had been good to her and devoted for so long, she lifted a hand and patted his cheek. He caught the hand and kissed it.

"My God, there's something about you, Karey, which gets me—makes me crazy for you," he muttered and held her closer.

"Please!" she said, and thought: "If this is to go on, day after day, week after week, year after year, I shall never be able to endure it."

Perhaps he sensed that it was not the time to press love-making upon her. With a short laugh he kissed the top of her head and let her go.

"I'd better take my bath."

"I'll follow."

"And you do love me a little bit, eh?"

"Of course."

He put a towel round his neck, picked up a sponge bag and went out, whistling, out of tune as usual.

She watched him go, then lay down on her bed and turned her face to the pillow and whispered:

"Dickon . . . Dickon . . . *Dickon!*"

■

Moonlight at Santa Clara.

Unearthly brilliance and clarity of light dipping into the sea; a sheet of silver in which every star shimmered and danced. The mountain peaks behind Malaga were dark, shadowy shapes against the starlit sky. On the beach dozens of little lights twinkled from the fishermen's huts. The night was filled with the sound of singing; queer chanting Spanish songs, as the men took their nets out to sea.

The Cuartel, the white walls of the old garrison looked whiter than ever in that clear blaze of moonlight; a fairy castle standing on the rocks with tall palm trees like sentinels pointing to the jewelled sky. The air was cool, but windless, to-night, and the moon looked so large and bright as it rose higher and higher in the heavens that it seemed to Karey to have been flung there by a painter's hand, too big and splendid for reality.

Never had she known such beauty or felt such glamour as here in Torremolinos. And to-night Santa Clara seemed more than ever enchanted; perhaps because her heart was aching and body, mind, and heart were hungering for the lover who had died, and for the lover who had come back; and this was a magic place for lovers.

Dinner was over. She had made a special effort to be cheerful and the meal had been a success. Ralph was in a good mood and satisfied that she was happy. She had put on his favourite dress; black lace with a low neck and long, tight, transparent sleeves through which the sunkissed flesh showed goldenly. She had pinned a red carnation in her hair, and when she had walked into the dining-room, Andres had smiled and said that the *Señora* looked truly Spanish; and Ralph had said that there wasn't a woman in the world half so beautiful.

She wondered if there was a woman in the world half so unhappy!

She was glad when that nice, charming old gentleman, Colonel Barr, induced Ralph to make up a four for bridge with his wife and himself and an American who was staying at the Villa. And it was lucky, she had felt, that she did not play bridge. She could

get away by herself for a while, and walk along this white terrace; look at the unearthly beauty of the Spanish night and give herself up to thinking. Sweet, wrong, dangerous thoughts, but they were winging up to Villa Rosa, to Dickon, who was alone, thinking, perhaps, of her!

She walked beneath the arbour, from which great masses of mauve wistaria hung like grapes from a vine; down to the next terrace, to a little arbour which looked sheer into the silvered water.

Her gaze travelled from the lights of Malaga to the dim peaks of Granada beyond. The beauty of it all caught and held her by the throat and made her cry out:

"Oh, Dickon——"

As if in answer to that call, he came—walking quickly down the cobbled pathway under the stark white walls of the garrison down which the wild geraniums tumbled, all colour drained from them by the brilliant moonlight. He came, slight and graceful, in his evening clothes, a cigarette between his lips. He walked as though something propelled him onward deliberately, doggedly, to that kiosk wherein Karey waited with a white Spanish shawl over one shoulder and the red flower in her hair.

When she saw him, she drew a great breath and stood transfixed, all the blood in her body rushing violently to her head. And when he saw her he stood still a moment and then came up to her swiftly, throwing the cigarette into the sea.

"Karey——"

"What are you doing here, Dickon?"

"I know I oughtn't to have come. But I had to see you. I meant just to look at you and then go away again. I expected you to be with your husband —or with a crowd. After dinner I felt that I must come down and watch you even pass me by, or go mad."

"Oh, Dickon——"

"It's true," he said and came close to her and stood there drinking in the beauty of her with all his soul in his eyes. "I've been through hell since I left you this afternoon. I love you. I love you and want you more than anything in the world."

She put back her head. Her eyes closed and her lashes looked dark and mysterious against cheeks which were pale in the unearthly moonlight. So pale her hair, too, that it was silver and the red flower a strange splash of colour over one small ear. The white silk shawl, embroidered with flowers, slid from her shoulder to the ground and stayed there unnoticed by them both. He,

breathing quickly like a man who has run a race, went on looking at her—just looking.

"I had to come, Karey, but I never for a moment thought I'd find you alone."

Her lashes lifted. A little smile parted her lips.

"And on such a night. In such a place. Dickon, it isn't fair. It's all against us—this wonderful, magic spot—that sea—that moon——"

"And this one woman," he ended and caught her hand and carried it violently to his lips. She felt the kiss burn first her finger-tips, then the palm, and then the wrist. And at last in wild, sweet panic, she cried out:

"Dickon—we mustn't—go away again—go away, oh, please."

"I would if I were strong enough, Karey. But as you've said it's all against us and we were meant for each other. Just as you were Noel's, you might have been mine——"

"I know it, Dickon. Oh, I know it."

"Why didn't you wait?"

"How did I know that you were coming into my life? How did I know that anybody existed who could make me feel like this again?"

"God, if only you'd waited. I'm not as tied as you. I might have got my freedom, but now it's utterly without hope. No matter what you felt about it, I couldn't even ask you to leave your husband for me—on your honeymoon," he added with a bitter laugh.

Karey shook like one in a fever. Her eyes looked large and unnaturally bright.

"Go away," she whispered.

"Do you want me to?"

"Yes, no, oh, *no!*" She stammered and put her finger-tips against her lips.

He smiled and whispered:

"Your eyes are pure grey to-night. This afternoon, while I was singing to you, they were green. And there are little flecks of hazel in them and your pupils grow big—bigger when I kiss you——"

"Oh, no——" Karey said under her breath, but he did not even hear her and neither did she care when he caught her in a desperate embrace and strained her whole body against his, covering her lips, her eyes, her throat with kisses.

Again and yet again they kissed, feverishly and hopelessly without assuaging that wild sweet hunger which was theirs. The red carnation fell from her hair, but her cheeks were redder now

than the reddest flower, and Dickon, looking into her eyes, watched that sweet dilation of the dark pupils, felt the quivering of her slender body in his arms and knew that she loved him—was as wildly in love with him as he was with her.

"Oh, my dear, my sweet, my Karey who should have been mine!"

She locked her arms about his throat.

"Dickon, Dickon, you're so like Noel was——"

"Love me for *my* sake—not only for his."

"I do—how could I help it, Dickon? You're all that he was and more, because you are yourself."

"Karey, this is the sweetest, maddest thing that has ever happened. Do you realise that we've only just met, my dear?"

"Love knows no time."

"I wish to God there were no time and that the clock could go back, and the moon stand still and the sun never rise again so that I could go on holding you in my arms like this."

"I don't want you ever to let me go," she whispered, and leaned up on the tips of her toes and pressed her cheek against his. "It's all wrong, Dickon, but I love you and I don't know how I'm going to bear letting you go away again."

"I love you utterly and absolutely, my sweet."

"Oh, Dickon—he used to call me that—Karey sweet. Oh, Dickon—it's too much—too much to bear——"

He saw tears in her eyes and kissed them wildly.

"You're not to cry. Karey sweet, you must never be unhappy because of me, or I shall wish we'd never met."

"How can I be otherwise than unhappy, Dickon? I am happy only at a moment like this when your arms are around me. But when you have gone——" Karey pressed her eyes against Dickon's shoulder and her two hands clasped convulsively about his neck.

He brushed the moon-silvered head with his lips very tenderly.

"It's all wrong, isn't it, Karey? Life's all wrong! It gives you something with one hand and takes it away with the other. Life has given us this hour only to take it away in the next."

"I know that, Dickon. That's been happening to me ever since I first loved Noel. I think I must be doomed—to love unhappily."

He held her closer, with fervent passion, begging her not to be unhappy; knowing himself to be equally desperate with unhappiness; finding no solution to their problem. One of the oldest problems in the world, never to be faced without new pain, new grief, as sharp and intolerable as the old.

"Why can't I take you away with me now, this moment,"

Dickon said hoarsely, "why shouldn't I carry you off to the mountains and never bring you back? Oh, Karey, Karey, it was the sweetest yet the most terrible thing that this should have happened to us. Like Paola and Francesca—do you remember that poem? 'Our souls shall rush together like one flame . . .' That's how it was with us, Karey. At a look, at a touch . . . and this flame which will never burn itself out, so far as I'm concerned."

"Or I," she whispered. "Because you are Noel, living again, I love you as I loved him. Because you are Dickon, I love you as I could only love Dickon."

She lifted a hand and traced the outline of his lips.

"Every feature photographed in my mind, in my heart, Dickon," she added with a smile which seemed to him the most sweet, the most tragic in the world.

He caught the slim finger with its pink polished nails and put it hungrily to his lips.

"What a wonderful person you are, Karey! What a wonderful lover! Oh, my sweet, this can't happen just to die out—it can't —it mustn't——"

Karey drew a shuddering breath. For a moment she had a vision of Ralph with his fair, arrogant face, and she could hear that self-confident voice saying: *"I am teaching you—aren't I?"*

She shuddered again and for an instant sheer panic seized her.

"Dickon—I made a terrible, awful mistake when I married Ralph. I was crazy at the time—I didn't care what I did. But this meeting with you—this love which has sprung up between us—Dickon, it makes all the difference in the world. It don't know how I'm going to carry on."

"And yet if I asked you to go with me this night—if I broke my own engagement –and God knows, Olive and I are not in tune—you wouldn't come with me, Karey."

"I couldn't. I made a vow to be faithful to Ralph until I died. See what I'm doing, Dickon. On my very honeymoon—this –"

"Sweet," he said huskily, "you mustn't judge yourself too harshly. It isn't an ordinary situation. The fact that I've brought Noel back to you in some strange fashion was responsible for it, otherwise I know it would never have happened."

"That's true. Absolutely true."

"And the fact remains that you are Chesney's wife."

"And that you're going to marry—your Olive."

"She's never been mine as you are, my sweet. Even on the boat —and one does many silly, romantic things on board ship—there was never a moment when I felt for her as I do about you."

"I'm glad," she whispered. "I can't help being glad."

"Karey, we have everything in the world in common."

"Everything, Dickon."

"How am I going to give you up?"

He buried his face against her cool pale neck. His fingers burned through the black lace of her gown Her whole body thrilled with wild delight. She clung to him and they kissed again and again, desperately, hungrily, caring nothing for that moonlit beautiful sea before them and the shadow of the old Spanish fortress which loomed above their heads.

IV

It was a disastrous moment for Ralph Chesney to take it into his head to walk down that terrace and look for his wife. He had finished a rubber of bridge, and feeling remorseful that he had left Karey to herself, came to find her, a newly lit cigar in his mouth.

Hands in his pockets, puffing contentedly at the Corona which Colonel Barr had given him, Ralph strolled down the cobbled path.

Then he stood like one rooted to the spot and the complacent lines on his face vanished. Like one who sees something outrageous, horrible, he stood staring at the two figures in the arbour silhouetted against the starry sky. He could not fail to recognise the young graceful figure and fair head of his wife. And he was equally aware that it was Noel Farringham's cousin, Dickon, who held her in his arms and whom she was kissing in such an incredible fashion.

The cigar dropped from Ralph's lips. He picked it up again, solely because there was a streak in him which prevented Ralph from wasting anything, even at a crucial moment like this. He hurried down to the arbour and called his wife, loudly, angrily, by name:

"Karey! Good God, Karey——"

Karey's heart seemed to miss a beat. She sprang apart from Dickon and stood staring at her husband, her face suffused with burning colour. This was the last thing on earth that she had meant to happen. For Ralph's sake so much more than her own Ralph, in his fashion, cared for her and she was his wife. She knew that he had every right to be horrified, but her remorse was because she had hurt him, and not because she felt she had committed a grievous wrong. It seemed the most natural thing in the world for her to love Dickon. Nothing in heaven or on earth could have stopped her from walking straight into his arms this night.

Dickon, his shoulders squared, looked at the man who was Karey's husband and felt precisely the same. He regretted this only because of the hurt to Chesney, not because he was conscience-stricken about Karey.

"Good God!" repeated Ralph.

Karey came forward quickly and spoke in a low, breathless voice.

"Ralph, please don't say anything now—I—I'll talk to you about it later."

Ralph gaped at her. If he had done as she wished, then, turned and walked quietly away, she would have followed him. She would have felt that he understood and been grateful. Out of the gratitude would have been born a new affection, even if he could never command her heart's love.

But he made the greatest mistake of his life in this hour. He had very little imagination and not much sympathy for human failings. He, himself, was a strong and moral man and he expected strength and morality in others. Added to this he was a very vain man, and even when Karey had told him she could not love him as he loved her, he only half believed her. His jealousy of Dickon Farringham had not seriously affected him. Never in his wildest moments had he dreamed that Karey could do such a thing as this.

He lost his temper completely. Shaking from head to foot he stormed at her.

"So this is why you wanted to take a stroll by yourself! This is why you haven't got time for me—good God—I wouldn't have thought it of you, Karey——"

She, dead-white, appalled by his lack of control, interrupted:

"Ralph—please!"

"As for you——"—Ralph swung round to Dickon—"you're nothing better than a——"

He never said the word. Rage choked it. But his right fist shot out and caught Dickon under the chin. Dickon, totally unprepared for a physical assault, staggered and went down on his knees.

Karey put her hands to her lips and screamed:

"Ralph—for the love of God——"

"I'll teach him," snarled Ralph, "I'll teach you both——"

Dickon was up on his feet again. His face looked ghastly. There was a drop of blood showing just below his mouth. For an instant the two men glared into each other's eyes, primitive fury and jealousy in the hearts of both. Then Dickon said between his teeth:

"If that's what you want, then we'll fight it out. But not in front of Karey."

Karey moved forward swiftly between them.

"There won't be any fight, Dickon —I beg of you—go, please, at once. I'm, terribly, terribly sorry that this should happen."

"So am I, Karey."

Hands clenched at his sides, Dickon faced Chesney again:

"I owed you an apology and I would have made it—but after this, no!"

"Go to hell," said Ralph, "and go there quick."

Karey felt sick. She felt that Ralph was showing up in very unattractive colours. He revealed a lack of breeding, of decency, of everything. And he had hit Dickon. It was as though he had struck at the dead Noel, and she felt that she would never forgive it as long as she lived. She bade Dickon go, anxious to avert any further ugliness. Already all the beauty, the magic of this night was dead. Something that had been white and shining was trailing in the dirt. Ralph, with his raw, brutal rage was trampling it there.

Dickon picked up Karey's embroidered shawl and handed it to her. For the merest instant their eyes met, hopeless, agonised. Then Dickon said:

"If you ever want me, you know where I am."

He walked away, and Ralph, still trembling with passion, shouted after him:

"I'll see that she doesn't want you, you swine! She never did want you—you took advantage of your resemblance to——"

"Be quiet!" interrupted Karey in a violent voice. She was astonished to find herself caught now in a whirlwind of anger as hot as his. Anger against this man who was desecrating all her most cherished dreams.

"If you say another word, Ralph, I'll never live with you again. I'll go away, to-night, yes, I swear it."

He laughed at her.

"To Mr. Dickon, eh?"

"Be quiet, you fool," said Karey. "Don't you realise what you're doing to me—what you're doing to yourself? I respected you. I looked on you as a friend. I married you because I thought you understood——"

"Understood what. Your tender passion for a young scoundrel who happens to look like the man you were once engaged to—and on our honeymoon—by God, you ask too much."

"I feel like Dickon –we both owed you an apology and would have made it. But not after what you've done."

"You ask me to condone it, eh?"

"I ask nothing," she retorted, flinging back her head, "I shall never ask anything of you again. I can only tell you that it was inevitable that I should feel like this, because no matter how hard I've tried to fight it, it is there—my love for Noel. It has always been there, and Dickon was Noel living again. We knew that it was hopeless. We knew that we'd have to say good-bye. If only you'd been a little patient——"

She broke off and burst into tears. Ralph, his rage cooling, stared at her sullenly. In a dim fashion he did understand what she was trying to tell him, but his vanity was too outraged for him to admit it. He was not in a mood to sympathise. She, with the tears pouring down her cheeks and her face distorted, turned and ran from him. He followed.

"Wait a moment, Karey——"

She did not answer, but ran on and on, stumbling a little on the stones. He followed her to the foot of the stairs that led up to their flat. But she ran up ahead of him and shut the door in his face.

He realised in that moment that he had been a fool. He had lost all chance of winning Karey—for ever.

An hour later Karey heard her husband come into the flat. She was in bed. She had undressed and gone straight to bed directly she had terminated the ugly scene which had been such a hateful finale to one of the loveliest hours of her life.

She had had long enough to weep out her heart for Dickon and the might-have been. Long enough to turn her thoughts from her own grief and think more kindly of the man she had married. After all, this *was* their honeymoon, and finding her in Dickon's embrace must have been a horrid shock for poor old Ralph.

If only he had been a little kinder, used a little more imagination, how differently she would have felt towards him now! When she heard those footsteps on the red stone floor she could only shut her eyes and pray that he would not come near her. She felt that for the rest of their lives together she would always see that brutal blow which he had landed on Dickon's unsuspecting face. *Noel's face.*

Ralph was not going to let this night go by without further talking. That was where he made his second mistake. He had gone up to the villa and smoked his cigar and turned the thing over in his mind until he became convinced that Dickon Farring-

ham was no more than a cad, philandering with another man's wife, and that Karey was weak and unreliable. Not very pretty thoughts for a man to have about his wife on their honeymoon!

He marched into their bedroom and switched on the light. Karey immediately shielded her eyes with her arm.

"Please turn it out——" she said in a small voice.

That was the moment when he should have knelt by her bed and carried her hand to his lips and whispered:

"I understand you've always loved the other man. I knew it when I married you. Only try to save something for me, because you're so very dear and so necessary to my life."

But Ralph Chesney was not the man to say or do such things. He started to wrench his stiff white collar from its stud, his face dark and sullen, and snapped at her:

"Sorry if the light annoys you, but I've got to undress."

Karey kept her arm across her eyes.

"I don't know how you feel about it," continued Ralph in a sulky voice, "but I don't think Torremolinos is big enough to hold all three of us."

"Must we discuss it in this spirit, Ralph?" she asked in a tired, dead voice.

"What do you want me to do—phone up to this fellow and ask him to come down to you?"

Her whole body seemed to grow hot with shame for him, rather than for herself.

"Ralph!" she said in a protesting voice.

"I repeat, this place isn't big enough to hold all three of us."

"What do you suggest that we should do?"

"Inform Mr. Dickon Farringham that he can find another place for his holiday."

Karey's arm dropped away from her eyes. She looked at her husband almost in wonder.

"You expect him to leave? When he has that villa up there? And why shouldn't we be the ones to leave?"

"Because we've booked our rooms and we'll have to pay for them. And I don't see why we should! We're not so well off as all that."

Karey gasped a little. The thing savoured of the ludicrous now. She was not used to people who behaved quite like this. Not for the first time during their brief married life she noticed the mean streak in Ralph. That it should be displayed at such a moment as this was a matter for contempt rather than anger. Her voice was icy when she spoke:

"My dear Ralph, if it's a question of money I shall be delighted to pay for our rooms, if you wish to leave."

Chesney kicked off his shoes.

"Nothing of the kind. We're very comfortable here and you like this place and the Barrs are unusually nice people—I don't want to lose sight of them. They know just the right crowd in Town and it's useful for my job."

Again Karey stared. Then she gave a short laugh.

"I see. How commercial your mind is, Ralph! I'm sorry that I'm not built that way, so I can't think on quite the same lines. Almost everything seems to matter to you except what *I* am feeling."

He scowled and shot a quick, defensive look at her.

"I know quite well how you feel. But I'm not going to pander to that."

Something inside her seemed to die; the last shred of hope that she and Ralph could ever understand each other in this life.

"Please don't try to pander to me, Ralph," she said. "I'd rather you didn't. Do exactly as you like about—everything."

"You behave as though *you* were the injured party."

"If I've injured you, I'm truly sorry. The first and foremost injury I did was in marrying you. I had no right to—feeling as I did. But I did try so hard to explain and you insisted that it would be all right."

"Damn it all, Karey, how did I know that this fellow existed?"

Her eyes, large and heavy with weeping, looked into his for a moment full of tragedy.

"Ah! That's just it. How did *I* know, either!"

He looked away from her uneasily. Even he could not be unaware of the suffering which was stamped on that small sweet face. When he was in dressing-gown and slippers, he shuffled to her bedside, sat down and rather shamefacedly held out his cigarette-case to her.

"Smoke?"

"No, thank you. I only want to sleep. I'm so deadly tired."

"I'm sorry, Karey. Perhaps I oughtn't to have lost my temper like I did, but it made me see red—God——"

"Don't, *please!* I can't bear any more, to-night. You know why it happened. I tell you, it couldn't be helped. But we've made up our minds that it is hopeless. I would never have let you down and Dickon would never have asked me to. Leave it at that."

"Oh, all right."

"And please, I beg you not to even suggest that Dickon should leave his villa. It would be most unreasonable."

"We'd better quit, ourselves," muttered Ralph.

"As you wish," said Karey.

Then the doctor in him superseded the man. He noticed suddenly that her face looked ashen and pinched. He put a finger on her pulse.

"Feeling all right?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Better have some aspirin."

"Thank you. I've already taken two."

He stared at her for a moment. For an instant he had a vision of her in Dickon Farringham's arms, straining passionately upward towards his kiss, and it drove Ralph Chesney mad to think that never, never during all these months of their engagement and marriage had Karey surrendered to him like that. Never, even while that white fragile body lay in his embrace, had she really belonged to him. His nostrils dilating a little, he bent over her and said:

"Will you kiss me good night?"

She felt that she would die if he touched her. Body, heart, mind, and soul, she was Dickon's now, as she had been Noel's. She belonged to the living as she had belonged to the dead. But because she had made a contract with Ralph, she tried to keep it.

"Of course," she said.

Then Ralph drew back, his own face livid.

"Not if that's all you have to offer."

"I'm terribly sorry. For God's sake leave me alone, to-night."

He went to his own bed and flung himself angrily upon it. The mattress creaked under the heavy weight. He switched off the light. Silence and moonlight pouring in through the little casements. The sound of shouting and cheering from the beach. The fishermen had pulled in a good haul.

A while later and Ralph's steady, snoring breathing filled the room. But Karey lay awake, staring into the darkness, the tears chasing silently down her cheeks.

V

During the next twenty-four hours, Karey behaved as though nothing untoward had happened, but she was facing one of the most difficult periods in her life. When Noel had died, it had been her right to mourn him and he had seemed to belong to her even in death. But Dickon, who was Noel living again, was in no way

hers; neither had she the smallest right to grieve because he was going out of her life almost as soon as he entered it.

She did her uttermost, during the day following that unforgettable night, to live up to the first two lines of Noel's last song.

"If you should leave me
I shall not die,
Or make grief a trumpet
To shatter the sky."

Dickon had left her. But what use to make public this new grief, this echo of the old sorrow? As she had said to Dickon, she was doomed to love unhappily. Now she must lock it away in her heart and let nobody know and least of all—her husband.

She was perfectly calm and ordinary that next morning when she put on a gay sun-suit and accompanied Ralph and the Barrs down to the sea. She laughed and talked a great deal and was one of the gayest of the bathing party.

Ralph had started the morning by being sulky and silent. Karey's exhibition of good spirits seemed to astonish him. He stopped sulking, but he did not answer her light remarks in quite the same strain. Neither did he give her a single intimate smile. He was attentive but icily polite.

Karey realised that there was a gulf between them which might never be bridged. The two men whom she had loved—incorporated in one—stood perpetually between Ralph and herself. Nothing could alter that.

As the day wore on she found it increasingly difficult to maintain her nonchalant attitude and good humour. The whole thing was a strain. It showed in the shadows which were like bruises under her eyes. And there were moments, for instance, when she lay on the brown sand, her oiled glistening body stretched to the hot sun and the red sun-umbrella shading her head, when the thought of Dickon seemed to break her heart.

Yesterday, they had lain side by side in the sun, like this—absolutely happy. Oh, Dickon, dear, gentle Dickon! What was he doing now? Was he alone up in his villa? Was he hurt as she was hurt? Or would he forget, quickly? For after all, how could this thing mean as much to him as it did to her whose whole life had been bound up in Noel whom he had given back to her?

After luncheon, when Karey and Ralph went to their flat for their siesta, Karey made a desperate attempt to get back to a friendly footing with Ralph. She was by nature a friendly and

affectionate creature. She could not bear an atmosphere of hostility with anybody, least of all the man with whom she must live.

When Ralph lay down on his bed without a word save to ask if she would like the shutters closed, she sat a moment on the edge of his bed and laid a hand on his.

"Would you like to go into Malaga to-night and dine somewhere, my dear? Are you a little bored with Torremolinos?"

Ralph drew his hand away as though he had been stung. But his eyes flashed suddenly. Any contact with Karey was a match to set fire to his passion. However, he considered himself a grieved and injured man, so for the moment physical desire was controlled.

"I don't know that I am particularly bored with Torremolinos," he said significantly.

She gave him a sad little smile.

"Bored with me, then?"

"I'm afraid I can't forget things quite so easily as you do."

That remark was childish and unnecessary, and it drove the smile from Karey's lips and the friendliness from her heart. She stood up, her lips quivering.

"If you think I've forgotten——"

"No, I've little doubt you're wishing your dear Noel's attractive cousin was here at this moment instead of me."

She went scarlet to the roots of her hair. Then she said under her breath:

"Don't speak of Noel . . . like that . . . how *dare* you——"

"How dare a husband have any rights?" he sneered.

She turned back to him and said in a despairing voice, trembling from head to foot:

"How can you speak to me like this! I thought I'd explained—that I'd made you understand the situation—and all you do is to try to quarrel with me—hurt me."

"Don't you realise the very thought of that fellow drives me mad!" said Ralph thickly. "I'm not a violent man—but, my God—the mere idea that you can feel as you did for him last night ——"

He broke off, reached for his cigarette case and drew out a cigarette with shaking fingers.

"We'd better get off this subject," he added.

"You brought it up," she reminded him, her face white and strained.

"Everything's my fault."

She turned back to him and said in a despairing voice:

"It's no good going on like this. What do you want me to do?

I'll do anything you like. I realise that I'm all to blame, but it's beyond my control. If only you would see that! All day I've been trying to forget—to start again—but you're not making it very easy."

He put the cigarette on an ashtray, caught her wrist and drew her roughly towards him.

"All right—we will forget it. I'm sorry. I suppose it's just because I'm in love with my own wife."

She was passive, unresisting when he drew her down on the bed beside him. Her eyes closed and her face remained very white. She thought:

"If he were really in love—wouldn't he be more patient—more understanding? It's all so physical this love of his——"

Ralph was kissing her passionately now—murmuring contritely into her ear:

"I'm a swine, darling. But you mean such a lot to me. Kiss me—no—don't turn you head away—kiss me like you used to. You weren't so unresponsive that first night in Town."

She had no answer, but her eyes felt hot and dry and she had to bite her lips tightly to prevent herself from crying out, from begging him to let her go She could not bear him to kiss her, hold her like this. Everything in the world had come between them. It was so horrible to give one's body without one's heart. When she had married Ralph she had found it possible to abstract her mind. Yet even on that first night, of which he reminded her, when she had been kind and generous, her thoughts had flown to her dead lover. Now they were with Dickon. Her brain was in chaos She was tormented beyond endurance by the whole scheme of things.

"You belong to me," Ralph was saying, "to me, Karey. Do you hear?"

She heard, but she had nothing to say.

At the moment of Ralph's possession when her body was in his arms, her spirit in purgatory, he drove her yet farther away from him, beyond all recall.

When he was sleeping, Karey dressed and let herself noiselessly out of the flat. She felt that the four white walls of that bedroom were going to close upon her and crush her out of existence. She needed air, space, and most of all, solitude. The ancient beauty of the Cuartel was no longer a delight. The glory of the sea and sky and of that flower-filled garden hurt her. She passed by all the beauty with eyes that had grown blind. She was intolerably hurt,

and it was in a state bordering on panic that she walked away through the gates of Santa Clara and into the village. Doggedly she turned her steps in the direction opposite from Villa Rosa. No matter how much she wanted to see Dickon, no matter how badly she needed the comfort of his healing presence, she must forswear that for ever. She owed it to Ralph.

Somehow she felt sick when she thought of Ralph.

What a hideous blunder she had made in this marriage of hers! And how, in God's name, was she to carry out her contract for the rest of her life?

She walked on blindly, caring nothing for the heat of the afternoon, until she found a solitary spot up the mountain side. There she flung herself down on the warm earth, which was starred with wild iris and rock-roses. Face downwards she lay, dumbly suffering, utterly without hope, and certain that there was no chance of any future happiness for Ralph and herself.

Her mind reverted to the night of Noel's accident and death, when her beloved father had taken her in his arms and comforted her as best he could.

"We've all had some tragedy to bear in life . . ." he had said. . . . *"You must carry on—try to face it, Pettit."*

She began to cry, brokenly:

"Daddy—Daddy—I wish you were here now—Daddy, I don't think I can bear much more——"

But later calm returned, and with it that courage which was an intrinsic part of Karey's nature. It was so futile to beat one's head against a brick wall. Dickon had come into her life, bringing back all the sunshine, all the ecstasy of old days. But if he had gone, eclipsing her happiness in the shadow of his departure, she must try to face things philosophically. Try to be grateful to life even for that one heavenly day of companionship with Dickon and for those few perfect moments of love on the terrace of the Castillo.

She stayed a long time alone on the mountain side. At tea time she walked back to Santa Clara, and when she met Ralph on the veranda of the villa for tea, she was herself again. But she had made up her mind to leave Spain—to urge Ralph to take her back to England.

Her new home was waiting for her there Better to go back at once and curtail this honeymoon which had been such a disastrous failure; to get back to mundane things. The savage beauty of Spain hurt her profoundly in her present mood. She longed to get away from beauty, from the place which meant Dickon; just as she had tried to separate herself from music, after Noel died.

She broached the subject to Ralph during tea.

They were sitting side by side on the steps of the veranda. Everybody gathered here for tea, and as a rule the Barrs sat with them. But to-day the Barrs were in Gibraltar, so the Chesneys talked together uninterrupted.

"Ralph, I want to go back to England at the end of this week—say Saturday," Karey said.

Her lips smiled at him, although her eyes looked unnaturally large and bright under the shadowing brim of the big straw hat which she was wearing.

Ralph, stirring his tea, gave her a quick look. He was in a better mood. He liked getting his own way and he had had it with Karey, but he was a little uneasy about her in his mind; anxious to do something to please her.

He fell in with her suggestion at once.

"Right-ho, darling. I'm quite game. Shall we go on to Madrid or Biarritz?"

"No, I want to leave Spain," she said, averting her eyes, "and get back to England."

"England —on Saturday? Rather a short honeymoon, old girl."

"Please, Ralph —if you don't mind—I would like to go home."

"Oh, very well, if you're so keen."

She sighed with relief.

"Thanks, Ralph."

He smiled at her, but he continued to feel uneasy. He had imagined that she was enraptured with this confounded place, much more so than he, himself. That damned fellow, Farringham, had spoiled it all, of course. Well, everything considered, if Karey wanted to get away from Farringham, it was only right and proper and Ralph applauded it.

So far as he was concerned, the atmosphere between himself and his young wife seemed a good deal clearer and brighter by the end of that day. Karey was her sweet, friendly self; altogether different now that they had decided to leave Spain.

He went to bed better satisfied with life, and confident that once he got Karey back in their own home things would right themselves and she would soon forget this unfortunate meeting with Noel's cousin.

But Karey, restless, unhappy, and hopeless, lay awake far into the night, every thought concentrated upon Dickon; upon that music room up at Villa Rosa, and that golden day which could never come again. She was no more likely to forget Dickon than

she had forgotten Noel. They were one—one lover -indelibly engraved upon her mind and in her heart.

VI

Three more days of strain, of blinding misery for Karey. Three more days, so near Dickon and yet so far. No message came from him. She did not expect one—he had his own code of honour and she was another man's wife. What he might do in a moment of uncontrolled emotion he could not go on doing in cold blood and neither could she. But it nearly drove her mad to think of him in this very same village. It was a wonder to her, also, that they did not meet. Perhaps fortunate, for both their sakes.

Then came the last evening of that unhappy honeymoon in Torremolinos. To-morrow, Monday, Karey and Ralph would take a P. & O. boat from Gibraltar to England.

And it was on this last evening that the unexpected happened.

Dickon and Karey came face to face in the village, just when the swift darkness was falling and blotting out the vivid beauty of the spring day.

Karey had finished her packing; she had left Ralph in the flat to complete his, and wandered into the village for half-an-hour's walk before supper. For a sentimental reason, too. She had fallen in love with this little Spanish place when she had first seen it. She had been both divinely happy and terribly unhappy here. She wanted a last look at it before she left. She loved the narrow streets; the white houses with their jalousies, the old pump; the sudden enchanting glimpses of flower-filled gardens and bougainvillæ rioting in cerise and purple glory over white walls.

Just outside the café with its amusing, delicious name, "El Delirio," Karey came face to face with Dickon, who was strolling in the opposite direction.

One brief look at that graceful, familiar figure in grey flannels, at the smooth, dark, handsome head, and Karey's heart seemed to stand still. But rushed on again madly when Dickon stopped before her and spoke her name:

"Karey!"

She drew close to him, her yearning eyes straining through the shadows up at the beloved face. The lights of the café behind her flung her fair, exquisite head into relief. Dickon returned her gaze as though his whole life depended on it. Not for an instant had she been out of his mind since that night which had terminated in the ugly scene with Dr. Chesney. Hungrily he took in every line of

the charming figure, of the haunting face in its frame of pale shining hair.

"Karey," he repeated under his breath.

"Oh, Dickon!"

"How are you, my dear?"

"Only just alive," she answered with a faint laugh, and her eyes filled with tears.

He was undeceived by her laughter and quick to see the tears.

"Karey, you're unhappy. God, I can't bear it."

"Did you expect me to be—happy?"

"No. Perhaps not. But perhaps I hoped that you would be—all right. I've been devilishly miserable, myself."

"Have you, Dickon?"

"It's hell, Karey. I told you that I loved you and I meant it. I shall never love anybody else."

That brought the flaming colour to cheeks which had been white for so many days under the deceptive tan.

"Dear, dear Dickon!"

He leaned down so that she could almost feel his breath fan her face.

"How beautiful and sweet you are, Karey! I don't think there's been an hour of the day or night that I haven't thought of you, wanted you, and regretted you."

"It's no use, my dear."

"I know that. I've been telling myself for the last three days that it's utterly hopeless, but it can't prevent me from loving you."

"Oh, Dickon!"

"I know I oughtn't to say it. And I daresay I deserve another knock-out blow from your husband. But he's got you for the rest of his life and it can't hurt him if I tell you, just for this one moment, that I adore you with every breath in my body?"

She looked up at him speechlessly.

He was frank and unashamed in his love—just as Noel had been. It appealed to all that was warm and natural and unashamed in her. As she mirrored her own gaze in the dark brilliant eyes of the man who stood so close to her she knew that she loved him that way, too, with every drop of blood in her body.

He said:

"I suppose I'm a cad—an outsider—to say such things to another man's wife."

She winced and cried under her breath:

"No, no, Dickon—don't spoil this moment with regrets or reproaches. How could we have helped this?"

" 'How is it under our control
To love or not to love?' "

quoted Dickon softly.

She finished it with shining eyes:

" 'Let us, oh, my soul,
Be unashamed of love.' "

"I know my Browning, too."

"You know all that I know, sweet Karey, and more."

"And here we stand, quite crazily staring into each other's eyes while the little life of Torremolinos goes on around us."

Dickon turned and glanced at an old woman who was baking doughnuts on a little fire outside the café, selling them for a few centimos. He smiled.

"That gnarled old woman was once young and once loved."

"And that old man on his donkey—he was once a lover," said Karey with a throb in her voice.

"The Spanish know how to love, Karey."

"Then you and I must come from Spain."

"If the truth be known it doesn't matter what nationality you are—when you are really in love—then you know how to love!"

"You always say the right thing, Dickon."

"To the right woman, my dear."

"Oh, Dickon, how hard it is to give this up."

"Much too hard. Last night was torment and so was the night before and so will be the days and nights ahead of me."

"But you're going to marry this—this Olive?"

"I don't know. I feel in my case it isn't too late to draw back. Since I have met and loved you I have realised how impossible it will be for me to make Olive happy."

"Dickon, I hate to think that I've come between you."

"You haven't come between us. Loving you has merely shown me that there should never have been an Olive."

"But if you promised——"

"One must break a promise sometimes, Karey. I shall tell Olive that I've fallen hopelessly and madly in love with somebody else—someone whom I can never hope to marry, but whom I shall love until I die. Then she must choose. I owe it to her, at least, to be sincere. If she still wants me under such circumstances, I'll carry out my contract."

In the dusk Karey's face seemed to grow small and pale and anguished.

"She's sure to want you, Dickon. You have that power—just as Noel had it—to make women love you for always—Dickon—you don't mind me speaking so often of Noel?"

"I want you to. We both loved him, and if I mean to you what he meant, then, my God, I know that you do indeed love me, Karey."

"Yes, yes, I do!"

"What hell!" broke from him. "If only you were not tied —"

"But I am and I can't let Ralph down. I feel guilty enough as it is."

"You mustn't—you must never reproach yourself. Karey—this is driving me mad. I want to take you in my arms and kiss you."

"No. I feel if you kiss me again I could not bear to go back."

"Then we'd better say good-bye, quickly, and this time it must be final."

A great lump came into her throat. She stood still, powerless to move or speak. Dickon gave her a long glance, ravishing his sight with the beauty and grace and dearness of her. Then he said:

"You oughtn't to wander alone at night. Let me come as far as Santa Clara with you."

"No—please. Ralph would misunderstand."

Dickon set his teeth.

"Very well."

"You do understand?"

"Only too well."

"Then, good-bye, dear, dear Dickon."

"I can't say it, Karey," came from him violently. "I can't and I won't believe that I shall never see you again. I'll say it in Spanish —which means 'until we meet again.' *Hasta la vista*—though God knows how or where." And he added huskily: "*Queridisima mia.*"

"*Hasta la vista,*" she echoed, "*queridisimo mio.*"

She turned quickly while she had the strength to go, moved away from him, and was lost in the darkness. Her eyes were tearless, but her heart seemed to ache with unbearable pain. She translated the Spanish endearments which they had used to each other, whispering in a small agonised voice:

"My darling—my darling!"

In that moment, turning her back on everything that seemed most lovely, most dear, she sent a queer, voiceless prayer to that other lover:

"Noel, help me—help me——"

She walked home quickly through the darkness and saw neither the moon rise like a great red circle over the water, nor the stars

come out one by one in the sky. She could see nothing but Dickon's face, hear nothing but that voice which had said:

"Until we meet again, my darling——"

Yet they neither of them had any hope of seeing each other again in this world.

Dickon watched Karey's slim figure moving away from him until the darkness swallowed it up. Then with a heavy sigh he turned and began to retrace his steps through the village towards Villa Rosa.

He was totally unprepared for the shock of hearing an unmistakably English voice just behind him say:

"Just one moment, Farringham."

He turned and found himself looking into the face of Karey's husband. He gave an exclamation:

"Doctor Chesney!"

"Yes, I don't suppose you expected to see me here."

"No, I can't say that I did."

"Any more than my charming wife expected that I should find her here with you."

Dickon, cold and rigid, looked at the square white blur of Ralph Chesney's face. It was a mask of jealousy.

"I don't think you and I have much to say to each other, have we?" said Dickon.

"Quite a lot. But not here in the middle of the village."

"I don't think I understand."

"But *I* do," said Ralph significantly.

"What exactly do you mean?"

"I want to have this out with you for good and all, Farringham."

"Have what out?"

"I refuse to start any discussion in the village"

"I am on my way home," said Dickon curtly, 'if you wish to come up to my villa——"

"Thank you, I will."

The two men fell into step and walked in dead silence through the main street. An incongruous pair; hostility and suspicion rampant between them. Two young Spanish girls, arm-in-arm, came down the street towards them, singing. One, with beautiful, long-lashed eyes and a flower behind her ear, threw an inviting glance at the Englishmen Neither of them appeared to notice her allurements, so she passed on, talking and laughing loudly to her companion.

Not a word was spoken until the climb up the mountain path

was finished. Then Dickon led the way into a small salon opposite the music-room. He switched on the light and faced Ralph.

"Now, Doctor Chesney——"

Ralph took a quick look round the room. The beauty and luxury of the little salon which was furnished with antiques and lovely old Spanish draperies left him unmoved. But his gaze was caught and held fascinated by the white alabaster figure of a nude girl poised with her arms above her head, her face lifted upwards. An exquisite young figure on a dark marble pedestal. It might have been Karey. And in some queer way it roused all the worst passions of insensate jealousy and rage in Chesney's heart. He doubled his fists and turned a savage face to the young man, who stood waiting for him to speak.

"I've come here, Farringham, to warn you that there have got to be no more assignations with my wife, or by God I won't answer for what I do."

Dickon narrowed his eyelids, but did not swerve from the other man's gaze.

"You used the word 'assignation,' Doctor Chesney. Not very correctly. If you imagine that Karey and I arranged to meet to-night, in the village—or even that night on the terrace——"

"I don't care a damn about the other night. But to-night I am perfectly certain that you met by arrangement. Good God, I'm not a fool. Karey doesn't usually go out for solitary strolls at this time of the evening. And why should you be there, at exactly the same time?"

"Because I happened to be taking a stroll myself. Karey and I met entirely by accident."

"I don't believe it."

"That's regrettable, but I tell you that it *was* by accident."

"Do you think I'm blind to the fact that you're trying to play the fool with my wife?"

Dickon's slim body shook very slightly.

"You don't choose your words very prettily, Doctor Chesney. I'm scarcely trying to *play the fool*."

"Then you're behaving like a cad."

"I told you the other night that I owed you an apology for what you saw, I admit that I lost my head."

"Lost all sense of decency——" said Ralph violently.

"Are we going to talk this over quietly like two rational human beings, or has there got to be a fight?"

"You can go to hell, but I warn you that you're not going to see any more of my wife."

"Karey and I said good-bye the other night. To-night we ran into each other accidentally. We said good-bye again."

"And are you saying another good-bye in the morning?" sneered Ralph.

"For God's sake——"

"I tell you, I won't have it."

"There isn't the shghtest need for all this. You know the facts —you know that Karey was very much in love with my cousin before she married you, and that I bear a strong resemblance to him—unfortunate, if you wish—but it isn't unnatural that she should feel—something out of the ordinary for me."

"That's as it may be, but there was no need for you to take advantage of it."

Dickon's nostrils dilated.

"Think what you like. I'm not asking you for criticism."

"No, but you're getting it."

"If I fell in love with Karey it was because I couldn't help it."

"It would be a fine thing for the morality of this world if every loose-living man went round stealing other men's wives on the grounds that he couldn't help it."

"I am not a loose-living man, Doctor Chesney. This affair has evolved from abnormal conditions. In God's name, why can't you understand——"

"It's preposterous that I should be asked to understand."

"Then let it be sufficient that Karey and I have said good-bye to each other for good and all."

"I don't trust you."

Dickon felt the palms of his hands grow wet and the blood surged across his face.

"You say too much. Look here——"

"If you'd had any decency," broke in Ralph, "you would have offered to quit Spain the other night "

"I'm looking after this villa for friends of mine. And I saw no reason why I should leave it. You exaggerate the whole affair. I was not trying to take Karey away from you, neither had she any intention of coming. She's absolutely loyal."

"Loyal enough to sneak out here to-night and meet you."

"You insult your wife, Doctor Chesney. But we won't argue that any farther. I've told you the truth about that, and if you don't believe it, it must rest at that. And if it's any relief to you I've made my arrangements to quit Torremolinos to-morrow."

Silence a moment. Then Ralph gave an ugly laugh.

"On the *Tunis*, perhaps?"

"Yes. On the *Tunis*."

"Knowing perfectly well that Karey will be on that boat."

Dickon stared.

"I had no idea of that. I didn't even know that she was leaving Spain. She said nothing to me."

"You seem to think me an incredible fool. All these things can't happen by coincidence."

Dickon's eyes flickered dangerously.

"This is going too far. I tell you, I hadn't the slightest idea that Karey would be on the *Tunis*. And it isn't astonishing that I should have booked a passage on the boat The usual way of leaving this place is by P. & O. from Gibraltar on a Monday morning."

"Or was it that you thought four days on board ship would give you further chances to alienate my wife's affections?"

That was more than Dickon could stand. He had already stood too much from this man who was Karey's husband—for her sake. But those insinuations—insults to Karey as much as to himself—drove Dickon mad. He had suffered all the agony of making the decision to put Karey out of his life. This mistrust and suspicion were not to be tolerated. Ralph Chesney might be a moral man, but it was he who was now behaving like the cad.

"Damn you!" said Dickon, and moved a step towards him.

Ralph's fist shot out as it had done on the terrace three nights ago. And this time, as before, sheer muscle and sinew triumphed. Dickon was the slighter man. The blow caught him between the eyes and he staggered back, lost his balance, crashed into the marble pedestal behind him, and fell heavily. The exquisite statue of the nude girl swayed and toppled over, and lay with a broken arm incongruously across the prone figure of Dickon Farringham.

Ralph stood quite still, breathing heavily, staring at the man on the floor.

"Come on," he said thickly, "get up——"

But Dickon did not move, and Ralph Chesney put a hand to his collar and wrenched it, his heart thudding in a sick fashion. His violent fit of temper had passed, and now that he was rational again, he was frightened by what he had done. He had not meant to do any real injury to this boy. The professional instinct came to the fore. He knelt down beside Dickon and examined him.

Dickon's face was colourless and his eyes were closed On the right temple the flesh was torn and a bruise was swelling. Blood flowed down his cheek. Quickly Ralph whipped out a white silk handkerchief which he saw in Dickon's pocket, staunched the flow of blood and tied the handkerchief round his head. He felt heart

and pulse and satisfied himself that Dickon was not in any danger. But the last thing that he wanted was to be found here and publicly censured for this incident. It had been a poor exhibition of lost control, and nobody was quicker than Ralph Chesney to realise the fact and regret it. He was a man who liked the approbation of the world.

He stood a moment staring down at the unconscious man and thought

"My God -what would Karey say?"

There was no sound in the little salon. No sound in the villa. The servants seemed to be in their own quarters, and nobody had either seen or heard the two men come in.

Ralph's one ambition now was to get away before he was discovered.

Dickon would recover consciousness in time and fend for himself Ralph had no hesitation about leaving him.

He hurried down the mountain path away from Villa Rosa towards the twinkling lights of Torremolinos.

About ten minutes later old José entered the salon with a glass of sherry for his master. One horrified look at the sprawling figure on the floor and the broken statue, and the old Spaniard gave a loud cry which brought his wife hurrying in from the kitchen.

"Maria! *Madre de Dios!* The *Señor*——"

The old Spanish couple, both of whom had grown attached to Dickon during his short visit to the villa, knelt, one on either side of him, plucking at his hands, calling him in their hysterical, rather helpless fashion.

Dickon came back from a long distance, opened his eyes, and as though through a cloud saw the brown familiar faces of the two servants He tried to sit up, but fell back with a sensation of deadly sickness. His head was hurting, spinning. He muttered:

"Karey——"

Maria looked at her husband.

"What does he say? What has happened?"

'I do not know,' answered old José "Look his head is bleeding —there is a stain coming through the handkerchief. We must send for the doctor. Go to the telephone, Maria, and tell the doctor that our *Señor* has been attacked. It is, perhaps, a case of attempted murder."

Dickon heard the words, but was in a semi-conscious condition and quite unable to repudiate José's suggestion. He lay there, dazed. He knew that Ralph had done this –Karey's husband. And the last thing he wanted was for the news to be spread abroad.

VII

But long before Dickon was fit enough to give orders, the old servants had unwittingly started the trouble. The Spanish doctor arrived. He had to come in his car from Malaga, and by the time he reached the Villa Rosa, Dickon had lost a good deal of blood, and was feeling extremely weak and ill. The news, also, had spread through the village like wildfire.

It was rumoured that the young English *Señor* up at Villa Rosa had been mysteriously attacked by an unknown assailant who had escaped unseen. The rumour, like all others, was exaggerated from one person to another, until it was finally reported that the *Señor* had been left in a dying condition.

Down at Santa Clara, Ralph had joined his wife for dinner. They had eaten it together in comparative peace. Ralph kept complete silence about his catastrophic visit to Dickon's Villa, and Karey was quite unaware that she and Dickon had been seen in the village together.

Ralph was, perhaps, more than usually attentive to Karey during the meal. But she extracted no solace from his attentions. The parting from Dickon had hurt her intolerably, and she felt that she did not know how to face the future without him.

Then, when Andres served their coffee, he gave them the news.

"Have you heard, *Señora*?" he said excitedly. "There has been mischief done up at the Villa Rosa."

Ralph's heart missed a beat and he changed colour furiously. But Karey's big eyes stared at the waiter, the pupils dilating.

"What mischief, Andres? What do you mean?"

"The *Señor* Farringham, *Señora*. He is the nice gentleman who lunched with you here, the other day, yes, no? He has been attacked by a mysterious enemy. They say he is dying——"

Ralph swallowed hard. For the first time in his life he was utterly discomfited and incapable of speech or action. He saw Karey grow white to the lips, heard her gasping voice:

"Attacked . . . *dying*——"

"*Si, Si, Señora*, so they say."

"Dying!" repeated Karey, who turned to her husband and looked at him with a sudden, terrible suspicion dawning in her mind.

Ralph fingered his tie uneasily, but he met his wife's gaze, frowning.

"What are you looking at me like that for, my dear child?"

"What does it mean, Ralph?"

"What does what mean?"

"This attack on—on Dickon."

He cleared his throat.

"Andres has just told you—an unknown assailant."

He broke off and coughed loudly to hide his embarrassment. He felt that it was a devilish awkward position, and secretly he wished that he had never been near Villa Rosa or lost his temper with Dickon so completely. But he was not going to admit anything to Karey. Heavens, but he half wished in his soul that he had knocked Dickon right out—done away with the fellow for good and all. Karey was in love with him. Her love, her fear for him, was written all over her white young face; showed in her stricken eyes, her trembling hands. It was gall for Ralph to swallow, the knowledge that Karey was giving to Dickon Farringham all that she had never offered him, her husband. He could even curse the man who was dead. It was Noel's image which she loved in Dickon.

Quite obviously he had been crazy to marry a girl of Karey's intense nature and highly emotional temperament. He was beginning to realise his mistake. Of course it was much too late and he himself was too arrogant a nature to admit complete defeat. This would pass, this insensate passion which Karey had developed for Noel's cousin. It must pass. To-morrow they were leaving Spain, and she would have to forget about Dickon and settle down to her new life in London.

Karey's voice interrupted Ralph's reflections.

"Are you sure you don't know anything about this, Ralph?"

"What the deuce should I know?" he began angrily.

Karey rose and pushed back her chair.

Just behind her, Penelope Barr, a pretty girl, burnt brown as an Indian and with eyes that looked all the bluer for her sunburn, hailed Karey excitedly.

"I say, Mrs. Chesney, have you heard about the affair at Villa Rosa?"

"Isn't Mr. Farringham a friend of Mrs. Chesney's?" added Mrs. Barr.

Karey tried to smile and answer, but could not. Ralph made an effort to smooth over the difficult moment. He had an intense horror of being the subject of any discussion or criticism; he felt that he had better put this thing on a proper footing, since Karey could not conceal what she was feeling.

"Oh yes, very old friend of Karey's—rotten business, isn't it—given Karey quite a shock——"

To Karey, *sotto-voce*, he added:

"For God's sake sit down. What are you doing? What will people think?"

"I don't care what they think," said Karey. "I'm going to Dickon."

"Don't be a fool, Karey."

Her heart was pounding, hurting. She looked at Ralph with dilating eyes. Her pupils were dark and enormous.

"Didn't you hear what Andres said he may be dying."

"Nonsense," mumbled Ralph.

"I shall go to see."

"You can't go up in the mountains alone."

"Andres can get me a car."

"What will people think?" repeated Ralph.

"I tell you, I don't mind," she answered in a strangled voice.

He followed her out of the dining-room, cursing under his breath. In the long Spanish drawing-room which led from the dining room to the hall he made a further effort to detain her.

"What right have you got to go up to this fellow's villa? I won't have it——"

She drew away the arm which he had gripped.

"Leave me alone, Ralph. I won't be ordered about. If Dickon is dying, I'm going to him."

"Anybody'd think you were in love with him——"

"You must think what you like, but I'm going," she said breathlessly.

He gave her a long, bitter look.

"On our honeymoon—good God——"

She moved her head from side to side as though tormented.

"Why remind me of that? I thought you loved me and understood what Noel meant to me! What Dickon means has all evolved from that. It may seem inexplicable to you and it may be wicked of me But I can't help myself. It's something stronger than I am. If only you understood——"

She broke off helplessly, turned, and rushed away from him. He let her go He had no alternative. He dared not make too much fuss in case she turned and accused him of being the unknown assailant for whom the Spanish police were looking. It would not be too good to find himself in the hands of the *guardia civil* There would be a terrible scandal. It would leak to England, and he had his reputation as a doctor to consider.

He went back to join the Barrs and to explain that Karey was not well. Karey ran down to her flat. She found a shawl, and put

it round her bare shoulders, for she was wearing a thin black lace dress and a little chilling wind had sprung up to make the night cooler than usual.

Andres could not get her a car, he said. It would mean telephoning to Malaga, and by the time the car got to Santa Clara much time would be wasted. So she changed from her high-heeled slippers into sandals and walked. She was not afraid. There was a moon to lighten the darkness and the strongest of all emotions urging her on. Her love for Dickon. That love which was a torch brighter than any moonlight.

Dickon had been struck down and perhaps was dying. She must go to him. And as she hurried through the village and up the mountain road there was a terrible fear in her very soul that she might not find him alive.

She could not bear to lose him as she had lost Noel. She could not face a second tragedy That would be beyond endurance.

She was white and breathless, and the silver fair hair was damp on her forehead, when she reached Villa Rosa and knocked at the door. Old José opened it cautiously and peered at her.

"Who is it?" he asked in Spanish.

She answered:

"The *Señor*. I must see the *Señor*."

He recognised the beautiful English lady who had spent the afternoon here with his master, and at once admitted her.

"Come in, *Señora*. The *Señor* is in bed."

Karey put a hand to her heart.

"How bad is he, José?"

José tapped his forehead.

"A little muddled here, *Señora*, but he can speak."

"Then he is not dying?"

"No, no, no, *Señora*. The saints be praised, he is far from dying"

Karey gave a laugh that was half a sob. Her relief was so tremendous that she felt as though a great iron roller which had been crushing her slowly by inches was lifted from her again

"They said that he was dying, José."

"No, no, *Señora*," the old man assured her as he led the way through the beautiful hall towards Dickon's bedroom. "His head is wounded, and he has to stay in bed, perhaps for some days But dying, no. The doctor has bandaged him, and is satisfied with his condition."

José launched into a graphic description of the way in which he and Maria had discovered Dickon on the floor beside the broken statue. Karey could not understand half of what he was saying He

spoke in Spanish and so rapidly. And then she forgot to listen at all, because he had opened a door and she saw Dickon Dickon lying in a big bed which had carved posts and beautiful Spanish brocaded curtains; against many pillows he lay, still and pale as ivory with a white bandage around his forehead; a single shaded lamp on the little table beside him showing up the dark shadows under his closed eyes.

For an instant she stood looking down at him. An agony of love seemed to well up from the very bottom of her heart. Dear, beloved Dickon, so like to that beloved Noel. Thus might Noel have looked after his accident when he lay on the road that wet autumn night, with his face turned to the sky.

The comparison made her heart fail her and filled her with an immense longing to hear Dickon speak and show signs of life. Anything to blot out the picture of death.

She moved towards the bed and called his name:

"Dickon! Dickon!"

He stirred and opened his heavy eyes. For a moment he seemed a little dazed and uncertain. Then as he recognised her, drank in the beauty of her in her black lace dress and embroidered shawl, with her wind-blown hair and sweet beseeching face, he held out a hand and spoke her name.

"Karey!"

"Oh, Dickon," she said, and knelt down beside him. The shawl slipped from her shoulders. She took his hand and pressed her cheek against it. "Oh, Dickon, my dear!"

Old José went out softly and shut the door behind him.

In Dickon's bedroom there was a long silence. No sound except the ticking of a French ormolu clock on the mantelpiece, the distant sigh of the sea, and the whisper of the wind stirring the lemon-trees outside the windows.

Dickon's gaze rested, as though incredulous, upon the fair shining head of the girl who crouched beside his bed. He could feel her tears wet against his hand. He was still sick and faint and his head hurt him. But in this hour the proof of Karey's love, the revelation of what she really felt for him, was worth anything that he had suffered. He could not speak for a moment because no words came, but at last he put out his other hand and touched her shoulder. She felt his slim, sensitive fingers, dry and burning, as though he had fever.

"Karey," he whispered. "Sweet, you shouldn't have come"

She raised her head quickly. Her eyes were bright and luminous with tears.

"I had to. I was afraid you don't know how terribly afraid—they exaggerated the report I thought you were dying."

He gave a faint laugh.

"By no means, darling. I got a nasty cut on my head—hit it against the pedestal—you know the one on which that statue of the girl used to stand. It's shaken me up a bit and I may have a bit of fever. Otherwise I'm all right."

"Dickon, how did it happen? My dear, how it's frightened me."

"Do you care so much as that?"

"Yes, yes. I oughtn't to, but I do."

"Who knows what one ought or ought not to do, Karey. I'm a fatalist these days. I don't think we have a dog's chance—Fate lays one net after the other to snare us and we're helpless!"

"Fate has laid a good net for us all right, Dickon. I feel, indeed, utterly helpless to fight."

"Oh, my sweet, to think that you love me like this."

Her body was suddenly shaken with a storm of weeping.

"If you had died –if it had been a repetition of Noel—Dickon, Dickon, I couldn't have borne it. No heart could stand being broken over again so badly."

He stroked her hair and her shoulders and arms.

"Hush, darling. Sweet, lovely Karey, don't cry. I'm not dying. I assure you I'm not. The doctor said I shall be all right in a day or two."

She kept her face hidden against his shoulder.

"Why did it happen? Who is responsible? Who is there who would want to hurt you, Dickon?"

He kept silent. He realised how easily he could prejudice her against Ralph, separate her from him finally, by telling her the truth. If she thought that her husband had done this thing she would never forgive it as long as she lived. But he was not going to do that. No matter how much he loved and wanted her, no matter how strange the circumstances which bound them together, he must try to play straight for his own soul's sake as well as hers

"How did it happen?" she kept asking him.

He made up a story. He had tripped over something, he said, slipped on the polished floor, fell and struck his head against the pedestal. José and Maria were dear old fools—ridiculous to have spread the rumour that there had been an assailant. A few minutes ago the police had come from Malaga and he had assured them that it was a mistake; that there had been no attempted murder. He had sent them away satisfied that he had had an accident,

although José still had it in his stubborn head that such was not the case.

Karey, drying her tears, listened to what Dickon had to say. She thought of Ralph and the slow colour burnt her cheeks.

"I wondered if perhaps Ralph——" she began.

"No, no, my dear. Think nothing of the sort. It was an accident," repeated Dickon.

She gave a great sigh.

"Whatever it was, thank God you're all right. But you look so pale, Dickon, and your head must hurt you. My poor darling——"

"I'm well again now that you're here," he whispered, "you've driven away the pain."

She bent down and touched the bandages with her lips.

"I love you so."

He caught her face between his hands and drew it down to his lips. He kissed her eyelids, her cheeks, her mouth feverishly.

"My sweet, I worship you."

"I can't leave you now."

"But you must. You must go back."

"I must go back this minute, yes. But I shall come again to-morrow."

"But you're going back to England to-morrow."

"I was, but I shan't go now."

His heart leapt and sang within him, but he hesitated to add a single persuasion, still feeling that he had no earthly right to take this love which she was offering.

"Sweet, you can't stay when all the arrangements have been made."

She tilted the fair shining head which thrilled him so unbelievably.

"I tell you I shall stay until you are quite well again. I couldn't leave Spain, with you in this state. I couldn't and I won't."

"How can I tell you to go when with all my heart I want you to stay?" he said.

She laid her cheek against his hand.

"I won't leave you, Dickon, while you need me."

"You know what your husband will think."

"He must think what he wishes. I'm going to have my own way in this."

Dickon smiled up at her.

"Sweet, you will always have your way, for who on earth could deny you anything?"

She laughed and pressed his fingers tightly.

"Dear foolish Dickon to say lovely things that I don't deserve."

"If only I had the right to say anything to you everything!"

He was panting, and there were little drops of moisture on his cheeks. She drew back from him anxiously.

"You must lie still Dear, you aren't fit to talk, to worry about anything. You ought to sleep."

His eyes half closed, but he carried her hand to his lips

"It's only my damned head A little concussion, perhaps. It makes one feel rottenly feeble. The doctor gave me a sleeping draught."

"Then you must sleep. I'll go back to Santa Clara. And I'll come up again in the morning."

"Karey, for God's sake, sweet, don't consider me. Do what is best for yourself. I feel I've caused so much unhappiness already —stirred up so much trouble."

"No. Don't look upon it that way."

He shut his eyes. He seemed too exhausted to speak any more. Karey stood up, looked at him a moment in tragic silence, and then bent and kissed his eyes.

"I mustn't stay. You aren't fit enough to talk. Good night, my dearest, and sleep well."

"Good night, *querida*."

"*Hasta mañana*—until to morrow," she whispered.

She walked out of the room and found old José and Maria in the hall, waiting for her In answer to their questions as to what she thought of the Señor she told them that he was not in a critical condition so far as she could see, but that he needed rest and sleep.

"Is there a vehicle waiting for the *Señora?*" José asked.

Karey smiled and shook her head and drew her shawl about her.

"No, José, I walked."

The old Spaniard, with the inborn courtesy of his race, offered to accompany her to the gates of Santa Clara She accepted, grateful for his escort. They walked together down the dark mountain road into Torremolinos. He talked volubly in his own language, and she answered with the few halting words which she had learned.

Just before he left her at the gates, she cautioned him to take every care of the *Señor*, and he assured her that he would do so.

Now she became conscious of intense fatigue. She walked into the flat and sat on the edge of her bed, shut her eyes a moment and tried to readjust her emotions. She tried to think about Ralph and this farcical honeymoon and the passage which was booked to England to-morrow. But her mind kept reverting to the picture

of Dickon, with his dark bandaged head, his white, spent face, lying in the big Spanish bed up at Villa Rosa. She knew that there would be terrible trouble with Ralph if she refused to go with him in the morning. But it would have to be faced. She could not leave Dickon any more than she could have left Noel while he was sick and in need of her.

After a while she walked out on to the balcony and stood looking out to sea, the wind blowing her hair about her head. And then Ralph came through the archway of the Cuartel and saw her. With a fast beating heart she waited for him to approach, waited for the scene which must inevitably follow what she had to say to him.

VIII

On the balcony of the flat, husband and wife encountered each other. Karey's face seemed to Ralph a pale sorrowful mask in the moonlight. He had gone through a very uneasy hour during her absence. He took it for granted that Dickon had told her exactly who the supposed "assailant" was, and he faced her sullenly.

"Well say what you're going to and get it over."

She looked up at him, blinking, a little bewildered.

"What should I say?"

"I never really had your love," he continued in the same sullen voice, "and now I suppose I've lost your respect. Oh yes, you needn't look at me like that, I know I've got the hell of a temper when it's roused, but I tell you it drove my crazy when that fellow told me that he had booked a passage on the same boat as ourselves. I hit him harder than I meant to—I don't suppose for a moment that he's dying—there's no need for all this panic——"

He broke off, pulling at his collar, sweating.

Karey stood very still. Light was dawning in her mind. She began to realise what Ralph meant, what he was telling her; to understand the reason for his sulky, half-shamed attitude. Her first suspicions had been correct. It was Ralph who had hurt Dickon. He must have gone up to the Villa this evening while she was dressing for dinner. Perhaps he had seen them together in the village; who was to know? Somehow in this moment she did not feel anything in particular against Ralph. She was calm and cold, devoid of emotion. She looked at his red, scowling face curiously, much as she would have looked at some strange phenomenon.

Ralph said through his teeth:

"I suppose Farringham has a good cause against me—perhaps he would like me to be arrested for assault."

Then Karey spoke.

"How queer. How queer that you should take it for granted that Dickon would give you away."

He stared at her, round-eyed.

"What do you mean?"

"Only this. You, yourself, have told me how Dickon got hurt. I didn't know it before. Dickon didn't tell me. Neither does he wish you to be arrested for assault. He made it quite clear to the police that there had been a mistake, and that it was an accident – that the servants had jumped to false conclusions. He told me the same story. So you see—he has behaved rather more nobly than you would give him credit for, hasn't he?"

Ralph Chesney clenched his hands at his sides. Fool that he had been to give himself away. Certainly he had not credited young Farringham with any nobility. He felt more than a fool. That maddened him. He could not bear to be the object of anybody's derision. Neither did he like the feeling that he owed Noel's cousin anything.

"Oh, well," at length he stuttered, "there it is—it was decent of Farringham not to tell you—but you might as well know."

She continued to look at him calmly. It was strange how detached, how negative one could feel, she thought. Perhaps it was the reaction after so much anxiety and fear earlier this evening. The only thing she knew, as she surveyed Ralph with her level scrutiny, was that he was right when he said that he had never really had her love, and that now he no longer had even her respect.

She ceased to feel anything for him but pity. She was sorry for a man whose jealousy should be so uncontrolled, and who had such utter lack of understanding of the whole situation.

Had he been kind and friendly as he had been in England after Noel's death—had he forgotten himself and his own desires—she would have been so much more a willing sacrifice. She would have been grateful and ready to lay aside her own desires. But his whole attitude since they had come to Spain and met with Dickon had aroused her resentment. She was of too independent a nature to stand such interference and possessiveness from anybody on earth, even the man she had married.

"Always remember," she said, "that Dickon did not tell me that you assaulted him in that unnecessary and brutal fashion."

"Damn it, you can blame me for assaulting him, but I saw you meet him in the village after you'd both promised to stay away from each other."

"We met by accident."

"That was his story."

"And mine, because it is true."

"How should I know that?"

"He told you so. I've told you so. Why take it for granted that we are both liars? I have never lied to you. I have been absolutely frank from the start about the whole affair. You knew when I married you that I still loved Noel. If I've failed you I'm sorry. But I don't think that this would have happened if you hadn't failed me so badly first of all."

Ralph glared at the stump of the cigar which he held in his hand.

"I don't see where I've failed you," he muttered.

"And I can't tell you if you don't see it. It's a futile discussion, anyhow The fact remains, that you had no right to assault Dickon. You might have killed him. And you left him up there with his head bleeding you, a doctor my God!"

"I bound up his head."

She turned from him with a gesture of contempt.

"How courageous of you to strike him down and then run away!"

He pitched the cigar over the balcony and caught her wrist.

"I won't stand you sneering at me. After all, you're my wife, and I don't see why I should put up with that fellow poodle-faking round you—even booking a passage on the same boat as ourselves —it was too much!"

She broke free from his fingers.

"If he was coming on that boat, then I didn't know it. And neither did he know that we were leaving Spain to-morrow. I didn't tell him. It was none of it arranged."

Ralph swallowed uneasily. Karey was telling him the same story that Dickon had told. He began to wonder if he had been too ready to suspect treachery where there was none.

"Even if you really imagined that Dickon and I were going back on our word, you had no right to assault him," continued Karey in her calm, cold voice; "but as it happens, neither of us was guilty. We meant never to see each other again."

"Isn't that best?" muttered Ralph "Damn it, since you are married to me, you might as well give it a chance. We shall be gone in the morning."

"I think not, Ralph."

"But we are going," he stuttered.

"If you go, then it will be alone. I'm staying on until the next boat."

Hot, scarlet, furious, he stared down at her.

"But you can't stay. We've arranged to go"

"Arrangements can be cancelled. I intend to tell them up at Santa Clara, to-night, that we are not going. If you like to stay with me, I'll take the next boat home with you and do everything that is in my power to make you a good and dutiful wife. But while Dickon is ill—until his head is better I'm not going to leave Torremolinos."

"God, that's too much——"

"You've brought it on yourself, Ralph. If you'd left Dickon alone I'd have been sailing with you to-morrow."

"The man isn't in a critical state."

"I shall wait and see that for myself."

"You really mean that—you really mean that you won't come to-morrow?"

"I do."

He saw the futility of arguing with her. He also began to see a little way through the veil of his own stupid vanity and lack of imagination. He said sullenly:

"I suppose I'm a bit to blame for this, so I'll stay with you, of course."

"Thank you, Ralph."

She turned and walked into the flat. He followed her.

In the lighted sitting-room he saw how white and exhausted she was in spite of her tan and how drawn her eyes were looking. He said gruffly:

"Better nip into bed, and I'll let them know up at Santa Clara that we're staying on a day or two."

"Thank you, Ralph," she repeated.

He kicked his toe against the red stone floor.

"Is that all you have to say to me?"

She gave him a long deep look from those tired and lovely eyes which made him feel strangely ashamed of himself. Without waiting for her to answer he turned and marched out of the flat. She walked into the bedroom. The trunks were packed. The two suitcases were open, waiting for the last things to be thrown in, to-morrow morning.

Slowly she began to undress. She was far too tired to collect her thoughts or worry about anything more to-night She could only be supremely thankful that Dickon was not, as rumour had it, a dying man.

So, after all, it had been Ralph who was responsible for the assault upon Dickon. That was only another impassable barrier between them. She could never forgive it any more than she

could have forgiven him had he injured Noel. He had climbed down—he was ashamed of himself now—but it was all too late. He had killed her affection stone dead, and it could never revive, no, not even a semblance of it. She had said that she would go back to England, once Dickon was better, and make Ralph a good and dutiful wife. That promise she would keep. But it would mean the end of everything that was beautiful for her, everything that was gay and happy and rapturous. Life could mean nothing in future but the endeavour to remain dutiful and to keep those vows which she had taken to Ralph when she had made the fatal mistake of marrying him.

When Ralph came back, Karey was already in bed with her face turned from him. He made no effort to disturb her. But when he was in bed and the light switched out, it was she who made a friendly gesture, just because she was grateful that he left her alone. She put a hand out to the bed beside her and felt for his fingers and pressed them.

"Good night, Ralph, and I'm terribly sorry for everything. I know that you must be, too, but let's try to be friends if we can't be anything else."

He pressed the small hand tightly in return.

"Sorry, old girl. I've behaved like a swine."

"Let's forget it. Just be patient for a few more days and then we'll go back to England."

"I'll do anything you like," he muttered.

"Good night," she repeated, anxious to avoid further discussion. And after that there was silence.

But neither of them slept well that night, and both of them were well aware of the hopelessness of their marriage. It had failed at the very beginning of their honeymoon and there was no knowing now how it was going to end. In the hearts of both, however, there was more than a little certainty that they could not go on like this indefinitely.

CHAPTER FOUR

I

VERY early that next morning Karey was awake. Ralph appeared to be sleeping soundly. She envied him his complete oblivion. He always slept as heavily, as soundly as a child. Quietly she washed and put on a pair of dark-blue slacks and a little white shirt. Then taking her hat in her hand she walked down to the Cuartel and up on to the terrace, where she stood for a moment looking out to sea.

The early morning hour was always the most perfect at Santa Clara. The Mediterranean looked like blue silk with the merest ripple on its surface. The sky was unbelievably blue, and the rising sun flashed splendidly against the white walls of the old garrison, and lifted the shadows from the purple mountains behind Malaga.

The swifts circled madly round the Cuartel, singing their usual morning hymn. The old fruit vendor who always came at this time led his donkey through the gates and Karey turned and smiled as she heard the clip-clop of hooves and watched the little grey donkey come into the courtyard with his panniers full of golden oranges.

The old Spaniard saw Karey and greeted her.

"Buenos."

Karey answered:

"Buenos días."

He showed his white teeth and pointed to the sun.

"Mucho calor . . . very warm!"

Karey smiled and agreed.

Yes, it was going to be very warm. The beginning of another lovely, sunny, lazy day in this Spanish paradise. But she found it difficult to respond to the beauty and enchantment which had so thrilled her when she had first come out here. Her heart was too heavy. Up in that flat Ralph, her husband, lay sleeping. The husband who could never be lover and had almost ceased to be friend. And in Villa Rosa, Dickon was lying with his wounded head – Dickon, whom she loved with all the love that she had once given to Noel. How was it all going to end? How could it end save in tragedy?

She walked up to Santa Clara and stood awhile watching the

gardeners work on their carnation-beds. They greeted her in their courteous way. The flowers were fresh and beautiful this morning. One tall feathery clump of palms looked strangely Eastern against the vivid blue of the sky. Close to the veranda an hibiscus tree flaunted its great pink, exotic blooms. From the distance came the sound of castanets and the clicking of little heels on a stone floor. A Spanish girl was practising a native dance on the veranda.

Karey drew a great sigh which seemed to well from her very heart. Oh, this gay, lovely, exotic place, so full of passionate promise, of languorous delight. How wonderful it would have been if she could have shared it with Dickon; if she could have wiped out this last dark, bitter year of her life.

She could see only too well how far she, personally, was to blame for all this trouble. Her grief for Noel had made an hysteric of her, blinded her to the true facts of life, stolen her sense of proportion, her judgment, her sanity.

She ought never to have married Ralph. It was terrible to think that one could be driven to do such mad things when one was lonely and distraught. Perhaps if Dickon had never come into her life she might have drifted on with Ralph in moderate contentment. But they were bound to have quarrelled, sooner or later. And it would have been an empty kind of existence, anyhow.

No, she could never regret having met and loved Dickon. But it was going to be the hardest thing of her life to leave him and shut the last and final door upon her happiness

She wanted to go to Dickon now, but restrained herself. She must wait till after breakfast. She must stamp on that wild yearning for him for all their sakes; for Ralph's in particular.

She put on her hat, wandered through the sunlit garden for a quarter of an hour and then went back to the Cuartel and the flat. Ralph was up now, on the balcony, already in bathing costume and dressing-gown. He was brushing his hair vigorously. His sleeves were rolled back. Karey looked a moment at those bare muscular arms and flinched suddenly at the memory of what had happened yesterday. There was too much strength in that right arm of Ralph's. It was with that fist that he had struck Dickon down, brutally. But she tried not to be hostile with him this morning, and she greeted him gently :

"Good morning, Ralph."

He looked up and only nodded in reply. Last night he had felt a swine; he had been remorseful, and, in his fashion, gentle with her. If only such feelings could have been maintained, if only he could have obliterated self this morning he might have stood a

very fair chance of winning back Karey's friendship if not her passionate love. But he had awakened in a black mood. The very sight of his wife's grace and beauty filled him with self pity. This was his wife. They were on their honeymoon. Damn it, she hadn't treated him very well, and he was feeling pretty sore about it. When Karey remarked that it was going to be very hot he only mumbled a reply.

She looked at him. The colour rose faintly in her cheeks and her heart sank. Weren't they going to be friends? Hadn't they signed a truce before they slept last night? Apparently not. She said:

"It would have been too good a day to leave Torremolinos, wouldn't it?"

"Well, you know how *I* feel about it," he answered; "don't ask me to appreciate the weather."

"Are you going to bathe?" she asked patiently.

"If you'll bathe with me."

"I will later, Ralph, but I must go up to see Dickon after breakfast," she said, anxious that there should be no deception about it.

Ralph scowled.

"I don't suppose there's the slightest need for all this fuss—the man isn't on the verge of dying."

Karey's colour heightened.

"I shall go and see him all the same. I think, having regard to the cause of the injury, I owe it to him to do whatever I can."

"And am I to be left alone here all day while you sick-nurse Mr. Dickon Farringham?"

Karey's nostrils dilated slightly.

"Ralph, are you going to make things doubly hard? We had this all out last night and I thought you understood——"

"I'm fed up with it!" he interrupted rudely; "the whole thing feeds me up. I wish we'd never come to this filthy place for our honeymoon."

Karey might have been sorry for him if he had not been so offensive. But his attitude had the effect of driving her farther from him than ever and putting her on the defensive.

"Please, Ralph, don't let's start the day by quarrelling."

"Do you owe me nothing?" he burst out furiously.

She took off her hat and pushed a fair wave of hair nervously back from her forehead.

"I owe you a great deal, and I'll do my best to pay my debts, but please remember that you brought this present situation upon yourself and you cannot blame me for it. You did this thing to

Dickon without any good reason—it was just that you couldn't believe a word that was told you by either him or me. Now you must face the consequences."

"Oh, hell!" was his savage retort. "Do what you like—I don't care a damn. I tell you, I'm fed up!"

He turned and walked away. Karey looked after him, her heart beating rapidly, her cheeks hot and pink That temper of his was going to be responsible for so much unhappiness between them. She could see that. Who could have dreamed that the practical, rather stodgy Ralph of old days who had been her father's partner could become this bad-tempered tyrant?

She felt more than ever helpless and hopeless about the situation while they breakfasted in grim silence on the veranda up at the villa. When the meal was finished Ralph marched away without a word, as though he had no further interest in Karey's movements. She saw no use in following him and starting any fresh, futile discussion. She changed from beach pyjamas into a yellow linen dress, put on sandals and went her way up to Villa Rosa.

There she found that the doctor from Malaga had just been called in to see Dickon and had only left a few minutes before she arrived. Old José made it clear to her that the *Señor* was not so well to-day and had had a poor night.

Karey, her heart sinking terribly low, walked into Dickon's bedroom. The long windows were shuttered to keep out the hot sunlight. It was cool and dim in here, but Dickon looked flushed and his eyes were feverishly bright. He was sitting up restlessly against his pillows. He smiled when he saw Karey and held out a hand to her.

"Sweet—what heaven to see you! It's like glimpsing an angel after a hellish night."

She took off her hat, sat down on the bed and looked at him anxiously.

"My dear are you no better? What did the doctor say about this——"

She laid gentle fingers on his bandaged head.

Dickon gave a faint laugh, keeping his brilliant glazed eyes upon her.

"Oh, I'm all right——"

"No, tell me the truth——"

"The cut's not quite so clean as it might be, that's all. There may be a little poison in it—it's throbbed like the deuce all night. You see, I wasn't quite so fit as I might have been—I was in rotten

condition when I had my appendix out, and I daresay any small wound would give me trouble. So silly, isn't it, my sweet?"

But she could not laugh with him. She was wholly terrified.

"Dickon—darling—but you'll have to be properly nursed——"

"Oh no, nothing of the sort. I couldn't bear a nurse hanging round me. I'm not bad enough. The doctor's a good chap, and he'll do the dressing for me every day—twice a day, if necessary. It was confounded luck falling against that pedestal—the sharp edge tore such a jagged bit——"

"Don't!" she broke in, with a sick look on her face, "and, oh, Dickon, my dear, don't try to keep the truth from me any more. I know—Ralph did it. He gave himself away last night. I'm so ashamed, Dickon, for him!"

Dickon took her hand and pressed it tightly.

"I'm sorry you found out, darling. But don't apologise for him. He just lost his temper, that's all, and I daresay I've been a cad to show how much I love you. Chesney's a suspicious fellow and he lacks imagination—but he has some right to be annoyed, hasn't he?"

"We were straight with him—he should have respected that."

"Never mind, my sweet. It wasn't really his fault."

Her eyes filled with tears.

"How marvellous of you to be so magnanimous."

He half closed his eyes and moved his head restlessly from side to side.

"It's all a confounded nuisance. I've got a bit of fever—that makes me feel rotten. But I'll be all right after a few days."

She pressed his hand against her cheeks and found it dry and burning.

"Your temperature is certainly up. What are you taking?"

"Oh, a dose the doctor gave me. Maria is looking after that."

Karey shook her head helplessly.

"I ought to come here and look after you, myself. My God, it's awful to be so tied."

"You must go back to Santa Clara, sweet. I can't let you stay here. There's your reputation—and I did tell Chesney that we'd agreed to separate."

"He did this thing to you and it alters everything!" she exclaimed. "He has no right to expect too much, and I've told him I won't go back to England until I've seen you safely over this."

He took her fingers and kissed each one in turn.

"My lovely Karey—so sweet and kind. But you mustn't worry about me. You must think of yourself."

"That means I must think of you. We're so closely allied, Dickon."

"Yes, I know it."

"Try to sleep, now, while I hold your hand."

"I don't think I could. I want to keep my eyes open and look at you. You're so beautiful, like a slender, yellow flower in that dress. I shall love you till I die, Karey."

A lump rose in her throat. With his bandaged head and flushed cheeks he looked such a boy and so pitifully in need of her tenderness. She leaned down and touched his hot cheeks with her cool lips.

"You know how much I love you and how long I've loved you. Long, long before we met."

"Sweet," he said, "I think the touch of your lips would bring me back even if I died."

"Don't talk of death, Dickon. It frightens me."

"I'm far from it, darling. It's only my confounded head that aches so badly."

"Poor head!" She leaned down again and put her lips against the bandages. "That will make you better."

"Sweet Karey."

His eyes closed. For a moment he lay quiet, holding on to both her hands, then he opened his eyes and smiled at her and sang, softly under his breath:

"'I did but see her passing by,
And yet I love her till I die.'"

"Such a small, shaky voice this morning, Dickon," said Karey with the lump still in her throat.

"Wish I felt well enough to get up and sing to you loudly, my sweet."

"I wish you did."

"Go and play to me, Karey."

"But your head—it will make it much worse."

"No, much better. Do you remember that afternoon when you stole into my villa and sat down at my piano and I heard you playing? It sounded like heavenly music, and then I saw you sitting there, you looked so lovely; too lovely—too human, to be a mere angel."

"I'm not at all an angel, Dickon."

"Lovely and human," he murmured, "go and play to me, sweet. Leave the door open then I can hear you."

"Do you really want me to?"

"Yes—please."

Obediently she left him and walked into the music-room. The morning sun was pouring through the long windows and across the flower-filled terraces she could see the incomparable blue of the sea. She sat down at the piano and ran her fingers over the keys. She played many things, anything that came into her mind at the moment She played Noel's songs, Dickon's songs, the songs they both used to sing and which one would sing no more.

She played everything but Noel's last song of death and grief, and that she avoided, because she shrank from the sorrow now—from the pain which must inevitably be her portion when she said good-bye to Dickon for ever.

She played the love songs of Tristan and Isolde; of Sieglinde and Siegmund. From Wagner she wandered into a wild Hungarian dance, from that into the soft, seductive lilt of an old Spanish tango And she thought:

"This might have been my life—to play to him, for him to hear him sing to me! We have everything in common Why, why did this happen to us?"

At last she felt that she could play no more because her heart was too full She got up and walked back to Dickon's bedroom. He lay very still and his eyes were shut He was sleeping He had fallen asleep while she played. Poor, tired Dickon; how sweet to think that she had lulled him to forgetfulness of his pain.

She stood looking down at him for an instant, her eyes yearning over him. Thus might Noel have looked while he slept Always those two must remain blended in her memory, in her love.

She walked out on to the sunlit veranda. She could not bear to leave Dickon just yet. She would have liked to be there when he wakened. But it was her duty to go back to Ralph To leave all this sweet peace and unity of thought and purpose and return to the [illegible]scord, the wrangling the farce of a honeymoon

Then she saw a car coming through the gates of Villa Rosa and paused to watch it. Perhaps this was the doctor returning If so she would like to hear what he had to say. But it was not the doctor. When the car drew up before the Villa a girl stepped out of it. An essentially British-looking young woman in a grey flannel coat and skirt, with a grey felt hat set a little carelessly on the back of her head. A girl who, in spite of flat-heeled brogues, was a head taller than Karey.

Karey, looking at her in surprise, had a quick glimpse of rather nice, frank hazel eyes, and strong white teeth, and short-cut brown

hair. She knew, instinctively who it was, before the girl introduced herself.

"This is Mr. Farringham's villa, isn't it?" asked a pleasant, cheerful voice.

Karey answered:

"Yes."

The girl in grey stared with some perplexity at Karey. Her first thought was:

"What a beautiful creature! How perfectly divine that blonde hair looks with her tanned skin!"

"Is Mr. Farringham about?" she asked.

"No," said Karey. "As a matter of fact he's ill in bed."

"Ill in bed!" The girl in grey ceased to smile. "Good Lord, really? I'm Miss Graham—Mr. Farringham's fiancée."

Karey had known it. She felt no emotion in particular as she regarded the woman whom Dickon was going to marry. Olive's coming to Villa Rosa seemed just a climax to all the difficulties, the tragedy of the whole situation.

"Ah, yes," said Karey in a detached voice, "how do you do, Miss Graham. I my name's Mrs. Chesney. I'm –Dickon and I are quite old friends. I used to be—engaged to—Noel Farringham, his cousin."

"Good Lord, really?" repeated Olive Graham.

"My husband and I are staying in Torremolinos—that's how we came across each other."

"But you say Dickon's ill in bed?"

"Yes, I'm afraid he is."

"One moment," said Olive Graham, "I must just settle with this taxi-man. Can you speak Spanish, Mrs. Chesney? Do deal with him for me if you can. I don't know a word and I've had a frightful time since I arrived in Malaga."

"You didn't come from Gib.?"

"No, I came by train from Madrid."

Karey settled with the taxi-driver. He drove away and the two girls faced each other again on the veranda. Olive Graham looked a trifle gravely down at the enchanting face and figure of the other girl.

"Tell me about Dickon," she said.

Karey stumbled a little over the story of Dickon's "accident." It sounded a little ridiculous—that he should slip and fall so heavily—but she added a good deal about the highly polished floor in the little salon and how slippery it was. Olive listened with some anxiety.

"It sounds a nasty thing. Is the wound very bad?"

"It isn't very big, but it's not healing by first intention—that is the correct term, I believe. It's giving a little trouble because Dickon isn't in good condition."

"I knew he wasn't when he left England. He had a rotten appendix. I hoped to find him so much better. What bad luck that this has happened!"

"Very bad luck."

Karey felt herself shivering a little in spite of the hot sunshine. Her nerves were frayed. It seemed incredible that this tall, strong, athletic young woman should be Dickon's future wife. This was the Olive to whom he had lost his heart on board ship in the glamour of the East! This was the Olive to whom he was tied. A nice, friendly creature. Karey could not help liking her. Yet in her heart she was horribly envious of her right to come here and look after Dickon and stay with him.

"What a good thing I came out," Olive was saying. "It must have been telepathy. Dickon had no idea I was coming. I just got it into my head two days ago that he might need me out here—that he might be lonely. My people thought that it was a bit unconventional, but I've travelled about so much by myself—nobody really minded. So out I came. I've taken a room at the Miramar in Malaga, and I thought I'd spend a week there and come out and see Dickon every day. Of course, I don't know much about nursing, but I daresay I could look after him——"

Olive broke off—she seemed to suddenly sense that all was not well here, that something more serious than Dickon's accident was afoot. Karey's eyes looked large and strained and her expression was unnatural, as though she was striving after a self control which she did not feel.

It struck Olive Graham, suddenly, that it was a little curious that Karey should be here alone with Dickon at this time of the morning. Where was her husband? Why wasn't he here, too?

Olive was not by nature suspicious, neither was she in the least jealous. Hers was not a passionate disposition. She was in love with Dickon in a rather prosaic fashion. She was that type of woman who would never either suffer very deeply or know the deepest rapture.

She had been greatly impressed by Dickon's extreme good looks and attractive personality when they had met on board, and in a burst of enthusiasm she had become engaged to him. She was not, however, desperately in love. She had always meant to marry and settle down and have children some day, and Dickon seemed

a charming person to have for a lover and husband But she was quite content to have a long engagement, and a big golf match in which she was featuring, offered Olive as much excitement as a meeting with her lover.

She would not have been human, however, had she not been a trifle suspicious of Karey's presence in this villa wherein her fiancé was living. Karey was so very pretty. She charmed even Olive's practical imagination Karey sensed the unspoken question in Olive's frank eyes and turned from her with a sudden furious blush. In that moment Olive said to herself:

"Hullo! What's up? This is certainly odd!"

Then suddenly a voice came from inside the villa:

"Karey! Karey!"

Hastily Karey turned to Olive.

"Won't you go to him, please, Miss Graham? Tell him that I — that I had to go back my husband is waiting for me. We're at Santa Clara, down in the village. I hope we shall see each other again. Good-bye——"

Stammering, she hastened away. She knew that she dared not go and see Dickon in the presence of his fiancée. She walked blindly through the gardens of the villa and down the mountain path past the olive trees towards the village. She felt that this was the end. The end of everything between Dickon and herself. She had no further right to go to him. Olive was his future wife. Whatever happened she must not come between those two. Already enough harm had been done.

Was this then to be her farewell to Dickon? Just those few moments sitting beside him, holding his hand; those few kisses against his bandaged head; that brief half hour of playing the piano to him and of lulling him to sleep? Would this be the finale to all the rapture of the thrilling love which had sprung to life between them in one sweet blinding flash?

She felt as though she were being squeezed dry of emotion; that there was nothing left in her heart. She could suffer and weep no more. Happiness was not for her. Nothing was left except a desire to do her uttermost to make Ralph happy.

She was met at the gates of Santa Clara by Penelope Barr, who was leading her donkey, gay with blue and scarlet trappings, up the hill.

"I'm just taking Lola for some exercise, Mrs. Chesney. Doctor Chesney is down on the beach with Mummy and Daddy. Isn't it a gorgeous day?"

"Yes, perfect," said Karey, and smiled and passed on, envying,

the child her youthful enthusiasm And she thought that it would be good to be eighteen again and fancy-free and standing on the very brink of life's adventures. She, herself, was still so young, very little older than Penelope Barr, but she felt a thousand years old this morning; felt that dull agony of mind and heart which she had experienced during the bitter months following Noel's death.

She had lost Dickon, even as she had lost Noel. One in death, one in life. And this was almost worse. For Noel had gone beyond reach, but Dickon was so close at hand—wanting her as she wanted him. Oh, what further could the fates do to torment her and how much more could she endure?

She found her costume and bathing robe, changed, and then went down on to the beach and joined Ralph and the Barrs. They were lying under a big striped umbrella by the rocks

The Colonel and his wife greeted Karey cheerfully. They liked and admired her. But Ralph had only a curt nod for her. Obviously he was still sulking. It did not seem to matter. Nothing seemed to matter any more. Karey sat down on the beach beside him and started, mechanically, to put oil on her arms and shoulders.

"I hear from the doctor that you went up to pay a charitable call upon the young man at Villa Rosa," said Mrs. Barr. "How is he, my dear?"

Karey's long lashes veiled her eyes.

"Not so well this morning. The wound isn't as clean as it ought to be."

Ralph shot a quick look at his wife, flushed scarlet, and then kicked at the sand, savagely, with his bare toes. Karey did not return his gaze.

"That was a curious business!" said Colonel Barr. "What's at the bottom of it, Mrs. Chesney?"

"Nothing," said Karey. "It was a pure accident."

"Well, I'm glad there aren't any mysterious assailants rushing round Torremolinos. I felt quite nervous last night!" said Mrs. Barr.

Then Karey looked at Ralph.

"By the way—Dickon's fiancée is with him. She arrived this morning by train."

Ralph raised his eyebrows.

"His fiancée?"

"Yes," said Karey in a toneless voice; "just at the right moment, isn't it? She can look after him now."

Up at the Villa Rosa, Olive Graham, having watched Karey's

graceful figure until it was lost from view, turned and walked to the room whence came the sound of Dickon's voice. He was still calling, a trifle anxiously, she thought, for Karey.

When she entered the bedroom Dickon did not, for an instant, see her. His eyes were closed. He just heard the footsteps on the polished floor. He said, drowsily:

"Karey—my sweet!"

Olive Graham stood very still. A deep flush burnt her honest face. She realised then, in a flash, that Dickon and the beautiful Mrs. Chesney were something more than platonic friends.

Quickly and ungrammatically, she said:

"Dickon—it's me—Olive!"

With a sense of shock Dickon opened his eyes, sat up in bed, and saw the tall familiar figure of his future wife standing on the threshold of the room.

■

Olive advanced to Dickon's bedside awkwardly. She had never felt more awkward, more embarrassed. Hers was a reticent nature, emotionally, and it filled her with a sense of confusion to have stumbled upon this hot, vivid revelation of passion. Passion which had vibrated in Dickon's voice when he had said those words: "*Karey, my sweet*——" and which she knew now had lain also behind Karey's casual conversation.

Those two were in love with each other. It was a shock to Olive and not a very pleasant one to greet her in the first hour of her arrival in Spain. On the other hand she was not unduly shaken by it. It was much more a question of embarrassment with her. She wanted to tell Dickon, at once, that she had discovered his secret. But it was not her nature to precipitate a scene and so, in an ordinary way, she greeted him.

"Hullo, Dick, my dear. How are you? I'm terribly sorry to come and find you like this."

He, with brain dazed by fever, astonished by the unexpected sight of her, stammered a reply:

"My dear Olive! What on earth are you doing out here?"

And simultaneously he told himself that she could not have heard his foolish words, and wondered, confusedly, where Karey had gone and what had happened while he lay sleeping. The last thing he had remembered was drifting into unconsciousness to the strains of "Tristan" which Karey had been playing.

Olive seated herself on the edge of the bed, took off her hat and ran her fingers in a boyish fashion, characteristic of her,

through her brown shingled hair. Impossible for Dickon not to make comparisons in his mind; and how could poor old Olive stand the comparison with that other, slimmer, lovelier figure who had sat here a while ago? Olive was essentially nice many men would call her handsome. But Karey had that rare and haunting beauty and that still rarer thing, personal magnetism, which drew men towards her whether they willed it or not

"I meant this to be a great surprise for you," announced Olive, "that's why I didn't write or wire that I was coming The parents thought I was quite mad, but I just decided that you might be very lonely out here your lettters didn't sound over-enthusiastic —and that's why I came—did it by train, as the boat took so much longer—and have settled myself in a hotel in Malaga."

Dickon roused himself from his drowsy, confused condition.

"My dear, light me a cigarette," he said.

She lit him one and he took a deep breath of it before he spoke again. Then he said:

"It was charming of you to come out, Olive. As a matter of fact I was a bit bored with my own company, although I'm in love with this place—it's enchanting. You needn't have stayed in Malaga –you could have taken a room at Santa Clara."

"Where your friends the Chesneys are," said Olive.

Dickon stared at his cigarette end. His heart gave an uncomfortable leap.

"Did you meet Mrs. Chesney just now?"

"Yes, I did." Olive paid attention to her own cigarette. "How frightfully pretty she is."

"Yes, very, isn't she?"

"It was nice for you to run into old friends."

Dickon, his brain working more clearly, thought:

"She couldn't have heard me just now—I must be careful - what's the good of hurting her—she's such a perfect dear——"

And the "perfect dear" was thinking:

"My poor old Dick—he's badly smitten. Trying not to let me know it. Now, I wonder what on earth to do? She's a married woman. That makes it very awkward—it's awkward on both sides."

"Very curious, meeting Karey in an out-of-the-way spot like Torremolinos," said Dickon. "She and Doctor Chesney are here on their honeymoon"—the words seemed to stick in his throat - "she used to be engaged to my cousin Noel. You know I told you on board, he was killed in a motor smash last autumn."

"Yes, I remember. You were very fond of him."

"We were devoted—a bit alike, as a matter of fact"

"It must have been awful for Mrs Chesney. But I suppose she's happy now?"

This was dangerous ground. Dickon steered away from it in panic.

"Damned annoying, this accident of mine, isn't it?"

Olive looked at the bandaged head.

"My poor old boy, *must* you slip on polished floors? How many cocktails had you had?'"

He laughed feebly.

"Not one. But of course, these Spanish servants do polish the floors very highly."

"Isn't the cut healing up?"

"Not quite as cleanly as we want it to, but I'm feeling a bit better at the moment. I've just been asleep."

"Well, I'm glad I've come out," said Olive; "now I can look after you."

"It was wonderful of you to come all this way," said Dickon, and forced himself to add: "Darling —"

Olive's frank hazel eyes met his for a moment. Then she got up and walked to the window, drew aside the shutters and looked out at the brilliant morning.

She knew without being told that she had lost her lover. And she wanted to tell Dickon that she knew, and to ask him to confide in her and make things easier for himself, for her, for all of them. She had known, perhaps for some time, that Dickon was not really in love with her and never had been in the true sense of the word. They had both been romantically inclined towards each other through their intimate companionship on the voyage from Australia. Those glamorous tropic nights had been responsible for the whole affair.

Just before Dickon's operation, when he had spent a week-end in Olive's home, she had asked herself whether it would be wise to carry on with the affair and marry him. They had nothing in common. He was not the open-air sportsman of whom she had dreamed, during those rare moments in Olive's life when she indulged in dreaming! He was an artist—a musician a poet. Frankly it bored her to sit and listen to him playing and singing for longer than half an hour at a time. She only really liked it when he played a popular refrain. She disliked the classics.

She was happiest out with her horse, or on a golf-course. Dickon neither rode nor played golf. He wanted to sit through the opera

season at Covent Garden She preferred a horse-show, a gymkhana, or a race meeting.

More than once she had been on the verge of asking Dickon whether he really loved her and wanted to marry her; often wondered whether he was just being chivalrous and carrying out a contract which he had made in an unguarded moment on the boat. But as soon as his arms were around her she had weakened —felt the old flame burn up—for he was an attractive lover and a charming personality.

This morning she was certain that their marriage would be a great mistake. If Dickon was in love with anybody, it was with this girl, Karey. But how to broach the subject and make it plain to him that he need not consider his duty to go on with their engagement, Olive did not really know

She thought:

"I won't say anything now anyhow Perhaps he'll tell me later"

Dickon, smoking, feeling horribly remorseful about Olive, and utterly wretched about Karey, wondered what Karey was doing and if he would ever see her again. If only he hadn't fallen asleep! He wished, passionately, that he had kept awake and spent every one of those precious moments with her while she was here. They were moments which might never come again.

Olive turned to him.

"If you really think I could get a room in the village here I'll move my things from Malaga," she said.

"How long are you staying?"

"A week."

"I only have another week here, myself."

"I might go back by boat with you, then"

"That would be great " Dickon tried to show some enthusiasm. "As a matter of fact, I can't see why you shouldn't stay here in the villa. There are dozens of rooms, and it seems so absurd just because of convention——"

"I don't care a jot for convention," said Olive in her direct way, "and if you're ill, I might as well be here to look after you."

"In that case I should get your things and settle yourself here. Maria will look after you she's a good sort."

"Right you are," said Olive. "How do I get back to Malaga?"

"José will telephone and they'll send out a car."

"How extravagant."

"Oh, the peseta's in our favour."

"That's fine."

Both of them casual, ordinary, friendly. No question of burn-

ing love, of intense, rapturous satisfaction at being together again. And there seemed no kind of reason why Olive should not come and stay here at the villa for a week -- no risk –she knew it. He knew it. He was thinking:

"Perhaps it's all for the best. I shan't see Karey alone any more. Olive's presence will make that impossible. Everything must end now—everything!"

But his heart was crying out for Karey. That head of his was torturing him again, and the pain was as much mental as physical. He suffered for Karey as well as for himself. He dared not think what it would mean to her to go back to Ralph and separate herself from love, from the happiness which that love meant to her.

By the end of the day Olive was installed at Villa Rosa and had constituted herself as nurse to Dickon. Not that she knew anything about nursing. And being a sportswoman, a creature of the open spaces, she was awkward in a sick-room and not much in love with the job. She did her best, however. And if Dickon found her presence and her ministrations jarring to his frayed nerves he did not say so He tried to appear grateful, even if he could not be lover-like. Fortunately she did not seem to expect the latter.

The doctor came out from Malaga and dressed his head again that evening. The wound was a little cleaner, he said. But the pain in Dickon's head seemed to grow worse and fever came back to harass him, and weaken his resistance. All through that day which Olive had spent with him, he had been hungering for Karey —aching for the touch of her thrilling hands, her healing lips, for a sight of that haunting face in its frame of fair, shining hair. Hour after hour he had worried about her—wondered what was happening to her down at Santa Clara; asked himself how he was going to live without seeing her again.

Olive, in her quiet, practical fashion, watched her fiancé, and was more aware than he realised of his mental condition. She saw that he suffered. She was terribly sorry for him and curiously helpless. What could she do? How could she let him know that she understood? If only he would open the subject—be frank with her -things might be so much easier for them both.

Then at half-past eight that evening the telephone-bell rang. Old José answered it, and soon afterwards came into Dickon's room, where Olive was sitting beside the bed, smoking and running her gaze over a magazine.

He spoke in Spanish to Dickon:

"It is the *Señora* Chesney, *Señor*."

Dickon, who had been lying against the pillows, feverish, restless, tormented, sat up.

"Si, si, José—what does she say?"

"She wanted to know how you are. I asked her if she would like to speak to the *Señorita*—she is holding on, *Señor*."

Olive looked up from her magazine. Her ears had caught the name "Chesney."

"Anything I can do, Dickon?"

"Karey—Mrs. Chesney—is on the telephone," he stammered. "She has rung up to enquire after me."

"I'll speak to her," said Olive.

Dickon's voice followed her to the door.

"My—my good wishes, and please thank her."

Olive thought:

"You poor dear, those eyes of yours give you away. Something must be done about this, and here's where I do it."

She went to the telephone and picked up the receiver.

Down at Santa Clara, Karey heard the voice of Dickon's future wife.

"Is that you, Mrs. Chesney?"

Karey, trembling, answered:

"Oh yes, Miss Graham. I just rang up to know how—how Dickon is."

"The doctor seems pleased with his progress, but I don't think he's so fit to-night, somehow."

Karey's cheeks flushed and paled, but she was thankful that Olive Graham could not see it.

"Why?"

"Mrs. Chesney—I wish you would come up and see him."

Karey's cheeks burnt crimson now.

"But, why——"

"I think he wants to see you."

"In that case—of course—but you are there—I don't wish to intrude——" Karey stumbled helplessly over her speech.

Came Olive's quiet voice:

"But do come up—won't Doctor Chesney come with you?"

That made Karey's lips twist. If only Olive Graham realised how little Ralph wanted to see the man who was the victim of his jealous rage! If only she knew the truth about that wound in Dickon's head! But, thank God, she didn't know.

"Are you sure that—that Dickon wants me to come up?" Karey asked.

"Quite sure. Do come."

"Then I will," said Karey.

She hung up the receiver. She was alone in the little room which contained the telephone. Ralph was in the drawing-room smoking his cigar with Colonel Barr. Karey stood still a moment, her nervous fingers twisting a green necklace which she wore around her neck. She caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror over the mantelpiece. How pale she looked to-night. Her eyes were dark and shadowed, and strangely green, as though they had caught the colour of the green coat which she wore over her white dress.

Her heart was tumbling, hurtling, racing. If Dickon was still ill and wanted her, she could not do otherwise than go to him, even though Olive Graham was up there at Villa Rosa.

It had been a black day—one of the blackest she remembered. For hours on end she had tried to be stoic, to settle down to the thought that she must live a separate existence from Dickon, must leave him to his promised wife and devote herself to her husband. But her thoughts had kept winging to him. And Ralph had made things so difficult. He stopped sulking once he knew that Dickon's fiancée had arrived on the scene, but he had been cold and haughty with Karey, as though anxious to impress her with the fact that he was the injured party and that she owed him apologies and recompense. In consequence she had avoided him and they were farther than ever from being good friends.

All day she had fretted and worried about Dickon until this evening she had been driven to use that telephone. And now Olive said that Dickon wanted her. Well, she must go, whether Ralph wanted to go with her or not.

She walked into the drawing-room and spoke to her husband.

"Ralph -please will you give me your attention for a moment?"

He turned a hostile gaze upon her.

"Certainly. What can I do?"

"Miss Graham has just rung up from Villa Rosa. Dickon wants to see me."

Ralph's square face coloured and his brows went up.

"Why should he want you—he has Miss Graham there?"

Karey, her fingers cold as ice in spite of the warmth of the evening, shook her head.

"I can't tell you why. But would you walk with me to Villa Rosa?"

"I haven't the least desire to do so."

"Do you mind if I go?"

"You know the answer to that."

"Ralph," she said patiently, "I must go if he wants me."

There were other people in the salon, otherwise he would have lost his temper. As it was he said through his teeth:

"Isn't his fiancée enough for him—has he got to have my wife hanging round him as well?"

Karey was pale as death under her tan.

"You persist in not understanding the situation as it is."

"I won't have you going up to that villa again."

"Miss Graham has asked me to go——"

"Then, by God, Miss Graham shall know exactly what the position is."

Karey swallowed hard.

"Ralph—please——"

"Go up, and I'll come with you and, I warn you, Miss Graham shall hear the truth from me."

"Will you tell her that your uncontrolled jealousy led you to do him an injury?" Karey asked under her breath. She was trembling from head to foot. "Will you tell her that Dickon and I meant to say good-bye, and that you didn't believe us and it was that which is responsible for the present position?"

He ignored that speech and said:

"I'll warn her that if she cares a damn about Farringham she'll be a fool to have you up at the villa."

Karey made a gesture of despair, turned, and walked away from him. He stood looking after her, glowering, the cigar burning to fine pale ash between his fingers.

Not for a moment did Karey believe that Ralph meant to follow her and create a scene at Villa Rosa. He would not be so mad as to give the show away to Olive Graham—for the sake of his own pride.

She changed her high-heeled shoes for sandals and put on a coat. She walked through the velvet night up that mountain road, now grown so familiar. She looked up at the stars which glittered in their millions, and wondered, wearily, how this thing would end.

Olive Graham was on the veranda, watching and waiting, and as she saw Karey's slim figure in the illuminating moonlight she walked to meet her.

"Nice of you to come," she said. "But are you all alone? Wouldn't Doctor Chesney come too?"

Karey shook her head dumbly. Her heart was beating fast, because she had come quickly up the mountain side. Olive, looking

down at her gravely, read the unspoken fear in those luminous, beautiful eyes and said:

"Dickon isn't bad—only restless. I thought it might do him good to see you."

Again Karey was dumb. Olive added gently:

"Come along in and see him."

They walked to the veranda. Karey, with a hand against her leaping heart, managed to find voice:

"My h-husband didn't want to come—I thought perhaps Dickon was bad—you must think this all so extraordinary——"

She broke off in a helpless way. She really did not know what to say to this girl who was making things easy and yet so difficult. Again Olive came to the rescue.

"Don't worry," she said. "Just go and see Dickon. I think he needs you."

"But why should you think that?" Karey asked in a strangled voice.

They were in the hall now and Olive paused a moment to stump the end of a finished cigarette against an ashtray which stood on an old Spanish chest. Then she turned and looked at Karey with a rather wry smile on her fresh frank face.

"My dear," she said, "I'm not blind, you know—nor a fool, and I think I understand the whole situation."

Karey's face flushed, burning red from chin to brow.

"How—why——" she stammered and broke off.

Olive nodded a head towards Dickon's door.

"Oh, he hasn't said anything, of course. At least nothing intentional. But after you'd gone this morning, I went to his room and he thought that I was you and he called me—well—something that was meant for you."

Karey swallowed hard.

"I see. I'm dreadfully sorry, dreadfully ashamed. What must you think?"

"I don't quite know. Except that I don't want you to be either sorry or ashamed. I've knocked about the world, you know, and I'm not a prude, although I must say your being married makes things a bit difficult. So far as I am concerned you need have no regrets. You see, I was never very sure of Dickon. And not very sure of myself. It's a foolish thing to become engaged because of a board-ship flirtation. They rarely work. Dick and I have nothing in common, and I've meant to tell him how I was feeling when I got out here, and suggest being just good friends with him. When I saw how things were between you two, it made my way a little

clearer. So you needn't feel you're breaking my heart or anything of that sort."

She finished with a rather embarrassed laugh. Karey, who had not taken her gaze from Olive during her long speech, drew a long sigh.

"You don't know what a relief it is. I would have felt so beastly —so mean—if you'd really been in love with him."

"Well, obviously I'm not."

"Have you told him?"

"No, but I'm going to."

"But what must you think of me?" asked Karey in a low voice. "It sounds so preposterous—when I'm here on my honeymoon. But there are extenuating circumstances——"

"I think I understand them, too," broke in Olive. "You were going to marry Dick's cousin, Noel, weren't you? Dick says you adored him."

Karey closed tired eyes.

"Yes."

"And Dick's very like him. Meeting him brought it all back to you. Isn't that the case?"

Karey hid her face in her hands. A little moan broke from her.

"Yes, yes. But oh, what a muddle it all is—what a hopeless muddle! What can we do now? How can it end except in tragedy?"

Olive Graham, sensible, practical young woman that she was, was suddenly smitten with strange tenderness for this girl who had suffered so badly and was still suffering because love had touched her in a way that Olive had never known, perhaps would never know.

She walked up to her and put both arms around her.

"My poor dear—I'm so glad I know about it. You're half crazy with misery and so is my poor old Dick. He's been trying to fight it all day. Don't cry, my dear. Just go in and see him and talk to him."

Karey pulled herself together with an effort.

"You're absolutely wonderful," she whispered. "You ought to hate and despise me."

"Why should I? I think life's played a scurvy trick on you."

"How can it all end?" repeated Karey.

The sound of heavy footsteps on the terrace outside broke the silence of the night.

"Hullo, who's this?" said Olive, lifting her head.

Karey put a hand to her throat.

She knew those footsteps well enough. She said through dry lips:

"It's Ralph—my husband. He's come up, after all. But not with very friendly motives. Oh, God, I can't face another scene."

"You needn't," said Olive. "Go in to Dickon. Stay there quietly. I'll have a few words with the doctor."

"He'll only be rude——" began Karey.

"Not to me," said Olive grimly, and turned and walked out on to the veranda to meet Ralph as he came into view.

III

Ralph Chesney was in a black, bitter mood when he arrived at Villa Rosa. He was riddled with jealousy, with an impotent sense of rage against Karey, against the dead Noel, against the living Dickon and, in the dim recess of his soul, against himself. He knew that he was not showing up very well. He was angry because he seemed unable to control his own feelings. His marriage with Karey had been a disaster from a psychological point of view as well as any other because it had done him no good.

He used to be calm and steady and balanced. Now he was none of these things. That was what love had done for him—love for a woman who did not return his passion. He had won Karey after a long, patient struggle, only to lose her again. That was his punishment for taking her at a time when she should never have been persuaded to do anything. She had not been in a fit state of mind to choose—to judge things reasonably.

He realised the futility of following her up here and making a scene. He knew, also, that he would be a cad to disturb another woman's peace of mind. But he could not stop himself. He had come. Now that he was here he was altogether unprepared for the calm, dignified young woman who met him on the veranda and introduced herself as Olive Graham, Dickon's fiancée.

"I have already met your wife," she said, "and I'm delighted you've come, Doctor Chesney. Let's sit down and have a cigarette. Can I offer you a drink?"

Ralph stammered an answer.

"No, thanks. Very nice of you—but—isn't my wife here?"

"Yes," said Olive quietly. "She has gone in to see Dickon."

The blood rushed across Ralph's face. It was dim out here on the veranda, but the light from the hall fell upon him and revealed him to Olive as a strikingly good-looking man, very much a type that attracted her. She liked his fair, curling hair, square chin, and bright blue eyes. He looked athletic, muscular, a sportsman—

totally unlike Dickon. She could understand that Karey, having loved Noel, who was Dickon's double, would not easily be drawn to Ralph. She could see in a flash the dissimilarity between the pair and the many reasons why their marriage could never be a success.

But she had a friendly smile for Ralph when she spoke to him again:

"It will do Dickon good to have a visitor. You don't mind being bored out here with me for a few minutes, do you, Doctor Chesney?"

Ralph, breathing quickly, said:

"Not at all, but I—this is a little difficult—I don't know what to say——"

"Don't bother. I understand."

"What do you understand?"

Olive seated herself calmly in a chair and motioned him to the one beside her.

"Those two in there are attracted by each other—she used to be engaged to Dick's cousin—and Dick and Noel are very alike—isn't that the trouble?"

Ralph, against his will, found himself taking the chair Olive indicated. She had a strangely calming effect upon him. He had meant to be rude, determined that either Karey came back to him at once or he made trouble. And, instead, he sat down obediently and accepted the position. He was dumbfounded because Olive Graham was accepting it, too. He looked at her baffled and in silence. "A damn fine-looking girl," he called her in his mind. She had nothing of Karey's delicate, elusive charms—something more solid—but attractive all the same. He was interested in her and, being interested, drove the demons of jealousy into the background.

"Have a cigarette——" said Olive.

"No, thanks," he said, "I've just finished a cigar."

She looked at him with her frank, critical gaze.

"You're worried, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"I know. You didn't want Mrs. Chesney to come up here."

Again he was baffled. He reddened.

"I can't say I did, particularly."

"You object to their friendship."

"Don't you?"

"Doctor Chesney," said Olive, leaning a little forward, "I'm rather quick to understand things. I'm built like that. I understood all about this as soon as I came."

"And you don't mind?"

"I don't happen to be in love with Dickon," she said frankly. "I daresay I should mind very much if I were. But as it is, I've realised that our engagement was a mistake. We aren't at all suited. I was going to tell him when I got here. So it hasn't broken my heart or anything like it. I'm not a very romantic person, you see. I'm really much more interested in my horses and golf-matches than in love."

He stared at her, then gave a brief laugh.

"How wise you are! You won't be so disappointed in horses and golf as in love."

"Oh, I'm not really cynical," she laughed. "I just accept things philosophically and you must do the same."

"I wonder if you realise, Miss Graham, that I'm out here on my honeymoon."

"Well——?"

"And that my wife and your fiancé are in love with each other," he finished bluntly.

"It sounds enough to make a man cynical—on the other hand, wasn't it inevitable?"

"Why should you say that?"

"Let's face it, Doctor Chesney. Your little wife wasn't in love with you when you married her, was she?"

"No," said Ralph, gloomily and unwillingly.

"And you knew it—you don't mind me talking to you like this, do you?"

"No," he said, and was surprised to find that he meant it. It was a curious relief to be able to talk frankly to a woman like Olive Graham, a woman as young as Karey, yet who seemed somehow much older and wiser; a practical person more like himself. He was beginning to be tired of the romantic streak in Karey. He told himself that romance was her undoing. Had she accepted Noel's death more stoically in the first place none of this damn silly business with Dickon Farringham would have happened. These intense natures were the very devil. He was not at all sure that Olive Graham was not the best type of woman for a fellow to marry.

Why had he been so foolish as to woo Karey with such persistence? Probably because she had not wanted him. It is the nature of the beast to be perverse. He knew it; saw his folly too late.

"You were quite aware that she was not in love with you when you married her," continued Olive. "Wasn't it mad for you to make such a marriage?"

"I thought I would make her care for me in time."

"Rather a fallacy to imagine anybody is going to change completely after marriage. Always a rather conceited philosophy, too."

Ralph gave a short laugh.

"I'm bound to say you're right."

"She was breaking her heart for the man who died, wasn't she?"

"Yes."

"My dear Doctor Chesney," said Olive, shaking her head, "how on earth could you expect her to do otherwise than to fall in love with my poor old Dick? They're as like as two peas—I've seen photographs of Noel—and I know."

"Yes, damn it," muttered Ralph.

"Don't blame her," said Olive gently, "blame life for playing such a trick upon all of you. Her love for Noel seems to have been a tremendous thing and it just all welled up again when she met Dick. I've never been wildly and desperately in love. I don't think I ever shall be, as I'm not built that way. But if I had been, and I'd lost my lover by death and then met his double—I'm sure it would have affected me in the same way."

"These things have to be fought," said Ralph grandiloquently.

"I expect they've both done a lot of fighting if you but knew it."

"I daresay—but——"

"Just put yourself in the same position," broke in Olive. "You have cared, and do still care very much for your wife. Supposing she died and you met somebody who reminded you terribly of her. Wouldn't you feel drawn to that woman in the same way?"

Ralph stared over the starlit terrace at the sea, which was now a glorious sheet of silver in the light of the rising moon.

"Yes, I suppose I would," he admitted.

He had admitted quite a lot to this girl—too much. He was surprised at himself, and at her because she had the gift of drawing the truth from him, and of bringing him face to face with it.

He felt suddenly more comprehensive of the whole situation, more able to grapple with it quietly and with reason than he had done since Karey's first meeting with Dickon Farringham.

He looked at Olive with a smile which she found rather pathetic and said:

"You're a very wise young woman. A lot wiser than I am. But you must remember that I was very much in love with my wife for a damn long time before I married her."

"It's bad luck," said Olive; "I'm so terribly sorry!"

"And now, my wise young friend, what do you suggest that we should do?"

"I honestly don't know."

Ralph hit the palm of his hand with his clenched fist.

"It's the very devil."

"It is."

"I supose you think I ought to offer Karey her freedom."

"I wouldn't presume to suggest any such thing. I can only tell you that I am going to break my engagement with Dickon."

"Even if I agreed to a divorce, how can I do it? We've only just been married—I have my reputation as a doctor to consider—and hers——" He broke off, floundering.

Olive said in a soothing voice:

"Don't let's do anything desperate just at the moment. Let's get back to England first of all. Things will work themselves out. They always do in some strange way. Here we are, coming to all sorts of decisions, and how do we know what those two in there are saying?"

Olive nodded towards the villa, then smiled at Ralph.

"Come in and have a drink. Dickon has some good cognac in the dining-room. And please, Doctor Chesney, accept things just as philosophically as you can. That little wife of yours has been through a bad time. One can see it in her eyes—she wants a lot of sympathy."

"Oh, I know I'm a selfish swine!" burst from Ralph. And never in his life before could he remember having made such an admission to a virtual stranger—and one of the opposite sex into the bargain. "You're really marvellous, you know," he added gruffly. "And you've been very decent to me and to Karey."

"I think it's such rotten luck for all of you."

"I could do with that drink—if you'll have one with me."

Olive rose and walked with him into the villa.

"Yes. I will. Come along."

Ralph felt suddenly very much better and happier. His admiration for Olive Graham was increasing by leaps and bounds. She was a damn good sort and most companionable. One could talk to her like one did to another fellow. She was easy to get on with. There was always something a little difficult and elusive about Karey. She was too remote; too artistic for him. This marriage, this honeymoon seemed to be curing him of his hopeless passion for her. Well, she had only herself to blame if he did fall out of love with her. She wouldn't mind in any case. He was suddenly convinced that he would be a fool to care any longer what she did, or how she felt towards him. He wouldn't humiliate himself any further. There were other women in the world—damn nice women

like Olive Graham, for instance, who seemed quite pleased to smile upon him and drink with him and talk with him.

"You're a golfer," he said as he followed Olive's tall figure into the dining-room. "So am I. What's your handicap?"

Her answer did much to increase his admiration. They swerved away from the subject of Karey and Dickon and plunged with enthusiasm into golfing stories over their drinks. They seemed to find a good deal to say to each other.

IV

In Dickon's bedroom, Karey had approached the bed on tiptoe, her heart galloping, her cheeks on fire.

Dickon was reading a Spanish evening-paper. For a moment he was not conscious of her presence. Then he looked up and saw her. The paper fell from his fingers.

"Karey!"

"Dickon!" she said, and ran like a child to the bedside, crouched down on the floor beside him, took his hand and pressed it against her cheek.

In astonishment and delight he looked down at her bowed head, bent and kissed her fair shining hair fervently.

"My sweet! But how on earth did you get here? I mean—Olive——"

"Olive is the most wonderful person in the world. She sent for me."

Dickon's pale face flushed from chin to brow.

"Sent for you!" he repeated.

"Yes. Dickon, she knows."

"About us?"

"Yes. My dear, darling love, you must have been dreaming—but apparently you called her by some name which you meant for me when she first came into your room this morning."

"My God, then she did hear——" Dickon was overwhelmed with shame. "I knew I'd said 'Karey, my sweet'—because I thought you'd come back, and I hadn't the faintest idea that Olive was in Spain. But I didn't know she heard."

"Well, she did."

"Then what on earth does she think."

"She knows—that you and I love each other."

"My God!" said Dickon again.

Karey pressed his fingers tightly.

"The queer thing is that she doesn't seem to mind. She said she was going to tell you that she wanted to break your engagement."

Dickon looked flabbergasted.

"I had no idea of that."

"She apparently sees that you were not really meant for each other and that the whole thing was a mistake."

"It was," he said, "but I didn't want to let her down."

"Well, she is less quixotic and more sensible."

He gave a wry smile.

"Yes, I'm a poor fool."

"Oh, my darling"—Karey bent and touched his lips with hers—"my darling—you're not—you could never be a fool."

"But I'm half demented with love for you, Karey."

"Then if that's foolish, I'm a fool—because I've nearly gone crazy, worrying about you."

"No need to worry, sweet. I'm much better to-night."

"Does the doctor say so?"

"Yes. The head's all right. This is all a question of the mind. I just can't get well because I am tortured with my love for you. I can't get you out of my thoughts for a single moment, Karey. It's a terrific love—no words of mine can express it—I just adore you, and I can't resign myself to separating from you—I can't!"

Karey slipped off her coat and knelt there, still holding on to his hand, speechless, ecstatic; looking down at him with her sweet, tragic eyes. His gaze rested hungrily on her lips and travelled to the smooth bare shoulders and slender throat. She was so tanned that she looked like a beautiful statue in pale, polished bronze.

"How glorious you are, Karey!" he said in a fervent voice.

"You think that because you love me."

"No. Anybody in the world would think you beautiful. You are."

"I love you," she said helplessly.

"And what about the doctor——"

"I can't seem to remember that Ralph exists when I'm with you. But he's here. At this very moment."

Dickon's dark eyes looked aghast.

"Here!"

"Yes. He followed me. He said he was going to make trouble with Olive. But she insisted upon my coming in here and said she would deal with him."

Dickon put a finger to his bandaged forehead in a bewildered fashion.

"Olive appears to be entire mistress of the situation and saving all of us. I'm staggered. I've always looked upon her as a sane, sensible, thoroughly intelligent person, but I didn't think she was quite as intelligent as this."

"I like her, Dickon. Why don't you like her better than you do me?"

"It would take too long for me to tell you all the reasons why I love you best. One can't really explain why one loves one person more than another. It's just that you're the one woman in the world for whom I've been waiting all my life."

Karey closed her eyes.

"I'm so glad. I want to be loved by you. But, Dickon—how can it all end?"

"We've asked ourselves that question so many times, my sweet."

"And there's never any answer."

"No. But I suppose Ralph will take you back to England. I've got to lose you, anyhow. My being free won't make things better."

She hid her eyes against his hand.

"I suppose not. And yet I'm selfishly glad that you aren't going to marry Olive."

"If it brings you any happiness to know that I shall never marry anybody on earth unless it's you—then that knowledge is yours. I've made up my mind that there can never be anybody in my life except you."

"Dear, darling Dickon."

"It's hell!" he said softly under his breath, "sheer hell, darling. We ought to have met six months ago. If only I'd been home when poor old Noel crashed."

"Yes," she whispered, "everything would have been so much easier then. We would have been just drawn together, naturally."

"And you would have married me instead of Chesney."

"Why, why did I ever imagine that Ralph could make me forget?"

"I don't think you did imagine it really. You were just dead—and you didn't mind what you did."

" 'I shall not die;
I shall be dead . . .' "

she quoted Noel's song. "Yes, I felt like that. And I remained dead until I heard you singing that day and saw your face and felt your arms around me."

"Sweet," said Dickon, "I wish to God I felt justified in asking you to run away with me. That's what I ought to do. You belong to me so absolutely that I ought to carry you off. Men did those things in the dim ages past—although if it comes to physical force —Chesney would win every time." He gave a rueful laugh—"I'm a poor, weak cuss to fight for my fair lady."

Karey raised her head and her luminous eyes flashed indignantly.

"There's never been a fair fight. Ralph just hit out like a bull—and you're recovering from an operation—and there it is—I don't care how weak you are, anyhow. I loathe sheer brute strength. It's your mentality I adore—just as I adored it in Noel."

"What a lovely champion I have," he said, and looked at her with adoration. "How wonderful to see those eyes flash for me like that—eyes of green and hazel, flecked with flame. My sweet Karey! I'd like to fight the world for you. But it isn't so easy as that. There's this question of law and order and contract and honour and all these little things which go to build up an almost impassable barrier."

"I couldn't leave Ralph, could I?" she asked with a despairing gesture.

"No, my dear. And I wouldn't ask you to."

"Then to-night when we say good-bye it really must be the final good-bye."

"If it isn't I shall lose all sense of honour and just run away with you, sweet!" he said with his swift boyish smile.

Then Olive Graham's voice, perhaps a little deliberately loud and bright, came from the hall:

"Mrs. Chesney!"

Karey jumped to her feet and picked up her coat.

"I must go, Dickon."

He clung on to her hand like a drowning-man.

"Is this our good-bye?"

"I suppose so," she said.

All the ecstasy of the last few minutes died down, leaving her heavy-hearted and curiously frightened.

"I suppose so. Oh, *my dearest*——"

She bent and passionately kissed him on the mouth.

"I won't come again, darling Dickon. It's better not. I'm satisfied now that your head is all right, and that you're going to get better, so I shall go home on the next boat."

"I shan't see you again?"

"I suppose not."

"My God—and mayn't I even write to you?"

"No. I couldn't bear it. It's got to be complete separation—a clean break for all our sakes——"

"Yes," he said and lay still and white against the pillows, his eyes blurred with pain. "I'll try to face it, but you—oh, I do so dread the idea of you being unhappy, Karey."

"I wasn't meant to be happy, Dickon. But I suppose there will

be some satisfaction in feeling that I have done the right thing. Good-bye—my darling——"

She kissed him again, and for a moment their fingers intertwined convulsively. Then she broke from him and walked quickly from the room. His voice followed her, brokenly:

"*Hasta la vista*—I can't say *adios*—it's too final."

She turned at the doorway and smiled at him, a strangely revealing, shining smile which gave him strange courage.

"*Hasta la vista, querido mio,*" she answered.

She shut the door gently behind her. In the hall she saw her husband standing beside Olive Graham. Ralph looked at her quickly, then looked away again. He cleared his throat and said:

"I hope Farringham's better."

She, who had been prepared for a storm, was baffled by his apparent calm. She stammered:

"Yes—much—I—think—we—ought to go home now."

"Yes," said Ralph, "we'll nip along. Miss Graham's been awfully good to me—I've had two drinks and we've had a most interesting yarn. I think if I ever played eighteen-holes with her, she'd beat me hollow, Karey. We find that we belong to the same club at home. We're going to meet and have a match or two."

Karey was too staggered by this reply. She began to wonder whether she was dreaming. Then as Ralph turned and walked out on to the veranda she cast a dumb, beseeching look at Olive. Olive came up and took both her hands and pressed them.

"My poor dear—don't look like that. He's not going to eat you up. He's really very nice, and if I didn't know the circumstances, I'd say you were a lucky girl to be married to him."

Karey remained speechless, and just shook her head. Olive added:

"But I understand—and I think so does the doctor. I think I've made him see things a bit more clearly."

"Have you? How wonderful of you! But what's the use? Dickon and I have said good-bye," said Karey in a despairing voice.

"Well, that's got to be just for the moment, hasn't it?"

"Not only for the moment—for always."

"Of that," said Olive, "I'm not so sure."

Karey shook her head again, then impulsively leaned forward and touched Olive's cheek with her lips.

"I do think you're a splendid person. I want awfully to see you again. Perhaps I will one day. Good-bye—and please take care of Dickon."

"I'll do that. Don't you worry any more about him. Just go home

and talk things quietly over with your husband—see what he says to you."

Karey, with tears in her eyes and no hope in her heart, turned and walked out on to the veranda and joined Ralph.

V

Neither Karey nor Ralph spoke to each other until they were half-way down the mountain side. Then Karey seemed to stumble a little as though she were very tired. Ralph put an arm through hers, and said:

"Hold up, old girl."

It was his old, kindly method of speaking. His voice had lost the lash of jealousy, of anger, which had been distorting his vision and hurting her for so many days. She was suddenly moved to weep, although when she had said good-bye to Dickon her eyes had been tearless. Now when Ralph looked down at her he saw that her lashes were wet, glistening in the moonlight. He pressed her arm tightly against his side.

"Don't worry, Karey. It's going to be all right," he said.

She choked back a sob.

"How can it be all right, Ralph? Oh, my dear, I feel so guilty—our honeymoon has been a disaster and it's all my fault."

"No," said Ralph in a queer voice, "I'm beginning to think it's mine."

She shook her head dumbly. She was not used to humility from Ralph and it silenced her. He added gruffly:

"That young woman up there has made me see sense. She's so damned efficient and sensible, herself. She pointed out that the whole thing's my fault because I ought never to have married you."

"But I'm just as much to blame."

"No. If I'd had half an ounce of sense I'd have realised that you never would care for me in the way I wanted. You were still in love with Noel on our wedding-day."

"What can I say, Ralph?" she whispered and stumbled again because the tears were blinding her.

He steadied her with another pressure of the arm.

"Nothing, old girl. Too much has been said already. I've been a ranting idiot. It drove me mad to think you were falling in love with Farringham. But I'm beginning to realise that you couldn't help it any more than—well—as Olive Graham said—if the same thing had happened to me I would probably have fallen in love with your double. There it is."

His unexpected sympathy brought a rush of gratitude from her overburdened heart. This was the Ralph to whom she had turned in the hour of grief when Noel died. This was the Ralph whom she had married because she imagined he would always understand.

"My dear," she said huskily, "I think that's wonderful of you. But please believe me when I tell you that I've said good bye to Dickon for good, this time. You and I are going to start again."

Ralph's lips curved a trifle grimly.

"You're a brave thing, Karey, and a very sweet one. Some women might have kicked out of this, but you've stuck to your guns. I admire that. It can't be easy for you, with your intense nature."

She flushed vividly.

"I've been very disloyal to you, Ralph."

"Not as disloyal as you might have been. But it's no good thinking about the past. We've got to make up our minds what's best to do for the future."

She looked at him in astonishment.

"Why have you changed like this? What's altered you, Ralph?"

"Talking to that nice, practical creature up at Villa Rosa, I suppose. She made me see that I have been a selfish swine blinded by my vanity. I thought I could hold you and I see now that I've done my best to lose you."

It was Karey's turn to press his arm. Anger and jealously drove her from him, but this new, humble attitude touched her to the quick. She was prepared to make any sacrifice for such a Ralph; to put Dickon utterly out of her life even if he could never be erased from her thoughts.

"Ralph, my dear, you're being very kind, but I promise you everything will be all right now. We'll go back to England and start again."

They were walking through the narrow, curving streets of Torremolinos. Most of the windows were shuttered, darkened for the night. One or two women, wrapped in their shawls, stood in lighted doorways and called out:

"Buenas noches."

Ralph answered them. They walked on until they came to Santa Clara. It was fully of unearthly beauty in the flood of white moonlight. As they walked into the Cuartel he gave Karey's arm a little squeeze.

"You're tired out, old girl. A long night's rest will do you good."

For an instant she closed her eyes and allowed herself the luxury of thinking about Dickon and the last, fervent pressure of his lips.

Then she shut out the sweetness of that vision and sighed and smiled at her husband.

"We both want a good rest. And to-morrow we must make arrangements to go home."

"We can't get a boat until Monday."

"Well, we must make certain of getting a passage then."

They reached the flat and Ralph switched on the light. He saw Karey's tear-wet face wander round the little white-walled room with its red-stone floor and simple furniture and the earthenware bowls of gay Spring flowers which made it look so beautiful.

"You don't want to leave all this really, Karey, do you?" he asked. "You love Torremolinos."

"Yes," she whispered. "But under the circumstances I'd rather get back to London and wipe out what's happened here."

He thrust his hands in his pockets. His lips took a rather cynical curve.

"Do you really think it can be wiped out? I don't."

She took off the green necklace which was twisted about her throat. Her small head seemed to droop on the long stem of that throat like a lily, he thought, as though the weight of that fair silken hair was too much.

"Oh, who knows?" she said helplessly. "But I want to do what's best."

"So do I," said Ralph.

Deliberately he turned away from the picture of her because he longed suddenly to take her in his arms. He walked to the window, leaned out and stared down at the twinkling lights of the fishermen's cabins on the shadowy beach. He seemed to see two frank hazel eyes smiling at him and to hear a quiet, friendly voice saying:

"Don't let's do anything desperate just at the moment. Things will work themselves out. They always do in some strange way. . . . Accept things philosophically . . . that little wife of yours has been through a bad time . . . one can see it in her eyes."

Ralph clenched a fist and beat it gently on the window-sill. He thought:

"That girl Olive is right—absolutely right—and if I hadn't been such a fool I'd have seen it before."

When he went into the bedroom a few minutes later he found Karey in her bed gravely brushing the silver fair hair which floated like a cloud to the bare, sun-browned shoulders. She laid down her brush and held out a hand. Looking up at him with a faint smile, she said:

"Come here a moment, Ralph."

He sat on the edge of the bed.

"What is it?"

She clung to his hand with both hers, flushing and paling alternately.

"You called yourself a selfish swine—but I've been selfish, too. Forgive me."

He took her in his arms for a moment and held her with passion, kissing the red, wistful mouth which she offered so generously. Then he let her go and stood up.

"No, Karey. No more sacrifices. That's got to end, my dear."

She turned and hid her face against the pillow, speechless, desperately troubled. Then she felt his hand on her hair, ruffling it.

"You're not to fret yourself, old girl. Just try to be happy for the moment. Things will work themselves out. They always do . . . and you've been through the hell of a time——"

Unconsciously he was quoting Olive Graham. And when Karey seized that hand which caressed her hair and pressed a grateful kiss upon it, he felt rather splendid, almost a hero. He liked to feel that way. When he was in bed he slept at once, proud of his conduct, happier than he had been for a very long time. His last thought was of Olive Graham.

"That girl did me a lot of good. I must see her again."

And Karey, quietly weeping herself to sleep, was thinking:

"I must do my best to stop loving Dickon and to make Ralph a good wife. He's been so marvellous to me to-night I owe him something in return."

VI

While the Spanish Spring on that lovely southern coast was approaching the hot and ardent Summer, it was still cold in England. So cold that Karey shivered in spite of a fur coat when, a week later, she and Ralph landed at Tilbury.

Her thoughts seemed as grey and as cold as the lowering skies and the keen wind which greeted them on their arrival in the old country. Torremolinos, Malaga, that wonderful sea road along which they had driven back to Gibraltar; the flowers, the fruit, the sunshine, the passionate beauty and romance of the place seemed like a dream that had passed. It could never have been reality. Dickon, too, was a dream. Karey kept telling herself that this was reality—this present existence with her practical, steady husband, who was going back to his job as a specialist; this grey, cold England, the flat in London which was her future home.

But the pain in her heart was real enough. The pain of remembering and of wanting the Dickon who was Noel; the anguish of certainty that they would never meet again on this earth.

She could banish all the rest as a dream, but the long agony that seemed never to have passed since the hour of Noel's death could not be ignored. It was too real, too acute.

She tried her utmost not to let Ralph see what she was going through. She had been trying ever since that night when he had shown himself a friend on whom she could still rely.

During their last few days at Santa Clara she had not mentioned Dickon's name again, she had remained steadfastly at his side. He, too, did not mention Dickon. But he remained kind and understanding and left her alone, for which she was supremely grateful.

Once they were back in London and settled in their flat, Karey was more than ever alone, because Ralph started work and spent most of the day in his consulting-room in Queen Anne Street.

They went out a good deal in the evenings. Mutual friends called to see them. They dined, danced, saw all the best shows, and led what the Karey of Brentham days would have called a full and exciting life. But she accepted it all just as she accepted everything else, passively, without enthusiasm. Nothing excited her.

As the days and weeks went by the need for Dickon increased rather than diminished. And there was perpetual nostalgia within her for Spain. She wanted the old white garrison-walls with the pink tumbling geraniums, Santa Clara, gay and beautiful with its carnations and roses, those tall green palms, fringing the terraces; the blue sea and the moonlight and everything that had meant Dickon and love and happiness.

She grew much too thin and large-eyed. Ralph watched her and worried secretly. What could he do? What could any of them do? How was this thing going to work itself out? He was damned if he knew. He felt he would rather like to see Olive Graham again and talk things over with her.

So it chanced that one evening in mid-May Ralph came back to the flat from his consulting-room, joined Karey in the drawing-room where a fire had been lit because it was still chilly and said, casually:

"Oh, Karey, I had a few words on the 'phone with Miss Graham this afternoon."

Karey, already dressed for the evening, and sitting on her favourite pouf before the fire, looked up with those large tragic eyes which worried him so these days.

"Did you?" she exclaimed.

He coughed and cleared his throat. Neither the name of Dickon Farringham nor of Olive Graham had been mentioned between them since their return from Spain.

But now the blood burnt Karey's thin cheeks and her hands clenched. She had wanted news of Dickon so badly—yearned to know that he was fit again—that all was well with him. But she hardly dared ask Ralph what Olive Graham had to say. Ralph satisfied the hunger which was naked in her eyes, and felt surprised because he had ceased to be jealous where she was concerned.

"Olive's back home with her people, and Farringham's in Town. Their engagement's off, you know."

Karey closed her eyes for a moment.

"Is it?"

"Yes. And he's back at work. Quite fit again. They're quite good friends, she says, see each other now and then."

"Did Miss Graham ring you up?"

"No, I 'phoned her."

"Why?"

Ralph gave a sheepish laugh.

"I took rather a fancy to that young woman."

"I thought she was wonderful," said Karey in a low voice.

But she was wishing desperately that Ralph had not come home and told her this; that she did not know that Dickon was in London, somewhere near and yet so hopelessly far. She wondered if he had forgotten or if he remembered with the same wild pain that smote her heart every time she thought of him. She felt, somehow, that the answer was "yes." Dickon would not forget. There was too strong a tie between them for that.

"I promised myself a game of golf with Miss Graham when we were in Torremolinos," continued Ralph, "so we're meeting at Addington Park to-morrow, being a Saturday, for a match."

Karey suddenly saw the humour of this. She began to laugh helplessly.

"What's up?" said Ralph.

"I don't know—it just seemed so queer. You and Olive Graham —it is funny."

"I suppose it is," he admitted. "But I think she's a damn nice girl, and if you don't mind——"

"Of course I don't mind," said Karey, "give her my love. I liked her, awfully, when we met. Perhaps she'd come and see us here."

"I'm sure she will," said Ralph.

He went off to change for dinner, whistling in his usual tuneless fashion.

Karey sat still, staring into the fire. Ralph was going to play golf with Olive Graham. Heavens, but it was amusing, even ironic. And Dickon was in Town and she must not see him or communicate with him, *dare not*. She knew where she could find him. He belonged to the United University Club, just as Noel had done. He lunched there nearly every day. He had told her so in Torremolinos. She looked towards the telephone which stood on a desk in a corner of the room. She whispered:

"Oh, Dickon, my Dickon, shall I ever hear your voice again?"

She felt restless and disturbed—more so than she had been for the last few weeks. She walked to her piano which she had brought here from Brentham, sat down and began to play. She had got over that first, agonising feeling that she could not hear music again. It was a relief to her nowadays to play—even the songs that Noel had once sung and which Dickon, too, could sing.

When she stopped, she could hear Ralph, from the bathroom, still whistling cheerfully out of tune. She hid her face in her hands and thought:

"Something must happen soon—something—or I shall use that telephone—I know it!"

Something did happen. And Karey did use that telephone. But for the last reason in the world that she anticipated.

Towards the end of June, soon after lunch, a flushed, dazed Karey sent a wild call through to the University Club and summoned Mr. Dickon Farringham in the middle of his meal.

When Dickon heard the sweet, breathless voice at the other end of the wire, the whole world seemed to stop revolving and stay poised for him for a few seconds.

"Karey—you!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, Dickon—Dickon—are you there?"

"Yes, indeed, I am."

"Dickon, I want you—here at my flat—come quickly——"

"My God, has anything happened?"

"Yes."

"But what? Are you all right?"

She gave a broken laugh.

"Yes—quite."

"Then what is it? Tell me quickly before I come——"

"You will come?"

"From the other end of the world if you want me. You know it. What's happened?"

"Ralph——" she said, and gave another broken laugh. "Ralph and Olive——"

"Olive!" he repeated. "Olive Graham——?"

"Yes. My dear, they've gone."

"Gone where?"

"I don't know. They've just gone. And Ralph's left a note for me asking me to divorce him because he wants to marry Olive as soon as possible."

Dickon waited to hear no more. The world was spinning crazily around him now. Everybody was crazy, obviously—and Ralph crazier than anybody. But what did that matter. Dickon seized his hat and stick, tore out of the club, jumped into a passing taxi, and gave Karey's address.

VII

When Dickon was shown into the sitting-room of Karey's flat he saw her standing by the window as though she were watching for him to come. She turned and looked at him as he entered. He never forgot the vision of her, slim and straight in her tailored skirt and white short-sleeved cardigan which made her look absurdly young. And she held her hands behind her back like a school-girl. Her cheeks were pink and her eyes dancing; an excited school-girl with a mischievous tale to tell and laughter lurking at the corner of lips which had been sad so much too long.

Dickon hesitated in the centre of the room. He was breathing quickly like a man who has walked fast. Her shining eyes regarded him, drinking in the picture of him, a little strange to her in his London clothes. She had only seen him carelessly dressed for the heat in Torremolinos. Yet it might have been Noel, as he had looked in Town; Noel's kind of grey suit and well-chosen tie, and his face still brown from the Spanish sun.

She ran to him, and was caught against his heart.

"Dickon—Dickon!" she said.

His lips claimed her hungrily, paused for breath, kissed her again, kisses like little flames darting from her eyelids to her cheeks and from chin to throat.

"Karey sweet, oh, my sweet Karey!"

"Dickon!" she said again and caught that dark, cherished head of his between her hands, looked long and earnestly up into his eyes, and fell forward again upon his heart with her face pressed against his shoulder and her arms straining him to her. "My darling, my darling!"

"For the love of heaven, tell me what's happened," he said huskily.

"I can't seem to speak for a moment," she whispered.

With an arm about her he led her to the sofa and sat beside her, still keeping her close to him.

"You look so sweet—so young—and so strangely happy. I've never seen you look like this before. Darling, am I mad or dreaming, or did you tell me that Ralph and Olive have run away?"

She nodded dumbly and handed him a letter.

He read it, keeping an arm tightly about her as though he was afraid to let her go.

She leaned her cheek against his and read it with him. She felt as though she knew it by heart, she had read it so many times. It was the most astonishing and unexpected letter she had ever received in her life. It was still a matter for bewilderment. Ralph, the practical, the sane, the slow-moving, had eloped—with a girl whom he had described as being "as sane and sensible as himself." How incredible! And yet the most unlikely people seemed to do the most unlikely things.

"My dear" [Ralph had written],

"I think this will be a complete surprise to you and at the same time a relief. You know I have been seeing quite a lot of Olive lately. Well, we have both decided that we were meant for each other and that we would be entirely happy married. I know that you want your freedom and that Farringham equally wants it, so I do not for a moment feel that I am leaving you in the lurch. I only ask you to divorce me as soon as possible so that Olive and I can get married.

"I wanted to arrange everything without bringing Olive into it, but she is a courageous, splendid person, and she wants to go through this thing with me. You know that I will see that you are provided for, and if ever you want my help or friendship it is yours. I shall always be fond of you, Karey, and regret that things didn't turn out better, but I was a fool to suppose that I could ever make you happy.

"Olive and I have decided to leave England at once and go to Australia, where she has relatives and friends, and where she thinks I can make good as a doctor.

"Be happy now. Things have worked out just as Olive said they would.

"Yours ever,

"Ralph."

Dickon finished reading this letter and then handed it back to Karey.

"I'm staggered!" was his only comment.

"You can imagine what I feel," she said.

"Chesney—and Olive! Well, that isn't so staggering—they are built on the same sort of scale—both athletic and fond of sport and unromantic. Yet here they are eloping in the most romantic way. I'd never have thought it of either of them."

"Ralph wouldn't have left me if he hadn't known I wanted to be free."

Dickon looked down at her through half-closed eyes.

"And are you sure you want to be free?"

She gave a short, excited laugh.

"Not for long."

He caught her hands and carried them to his lips.

"Are you suggesting, sweet thing, that somebody might want to marry you when you get this divorce?"

She nodded dumbly. He caught her back in his arms and with a long sigh buried his lips against her fair silken hair.

"My God, somebody does want to marry you—more than anything in the world. Karey, I can't believe this is true."

"Neither can I. I might have thought of all kinds of ways out for us—but not this one."

"Which only proves, Karey, that one never does know what another person is going to do."

"Of course, I saw that Ralph was interested in Olive. He's played a lot of golf with her lately and brought her here once or twice. I felt that he was changing—he seemed to be in a mild state of excitement and anticipation—but it never entered my head that he was falling wildly in love with her."

Dickon put out a hand and caressed her hair.

"And you weren't in the least jealous?"

"How could I be, Dickon, when all my thoughts were of you?"

"Were they, sweet?"

"Yes. I haven't had you out of my mind day or night since I left Torremolinos."

"I can say the same, Karey. Time has dragged intolerably. I haven't been interested in my work or my music or anything. It's just been hell to me to know that you were in Town and that I couldn't see you and mustn't communicate with you. And when I sat down to my lunch to-day at the club and they told me that a Mrs. Chesney wanted me on the 'phone——"

"Oh, darling, were you glad?"

"What do you think?"

"And haven't you had any lunch?"

"Who wants it? The sight of your shining eyes is food for the gods."

She drew a long deep sigh.

"And now there'll be this divorce—I'll have to go to solicitors and see about it, won't I?"

He looked at her more gravely.

"Do you mind, sweet? It isn't altogether pleasant for you."

"If it sets me free I shan't mind the unpleasantness, Dickon. And if it makes Ralph and Olive happy, too, then we can all be happy."

"A re-shuffling of the cards," he said softly, "the best thing that could have happened."

"How long will it all take, Dickon?"

"Six months—perhaps a little more."

"And until then you and I mustn't be together."

"No. We must very definitely stay apart."

"That will be a little hard, darling," she said with a catch in her throat.

"Too hard, darling. But it's got to be faced. And with so much to look forward to—well—I think it will be bearable."

"I shall put the affair into the hands of the lawyers and then go straight back to Spain and wait there."

"By yourself, all those months? Oh, Karey!"

"Perhaps not by myself all the time. I'll ask my friend Joan to come out and stay with me and there are the Barrs. Mrs. Barr has asked me many times to go and stay at the Villa which they have built near Gibraltar. I can fill in the time. And then when the divorce is through——"

"When that's through," broke in Dickon, "it will be an aeroplane for me. The boat and the train won't be quick enough."

For a moment they clung together in speechless happiness. Then Karey looked over her lover's shoulder at the piano and the tears gathered in her eyes. She whispered:

"Dickon, I think Noel would be glad, don't you?"

And Dickon answered:

"I know he would. I know it. There isn't any doubt about that at all."

"Sing to me just once before you leave me, Dickon," she whispered.

"And after that—very soon now—I shall sing to you so many times that you will grow tired of hearing my voice."

"No, darling But you may grow tired of hearing me play."

"Impossible."

"Then neither of us will get tired of anything," she said with a breathless laugh, and the tears in her eyes were for happiness and not for sorrow.

He kissed her hands and then took his place at the piano and ran his fingers over the keys.

"What shall I sing to you?"

"Something foolish and sweet—anything that comes into your head."

He smiled at her and kept those dark brilliant eyes of his fixed upon her while he sang, the sweet foolish song that she wanted. The song was from "Private Lives," which seemed so suited to the occasion. He crooned rather than sang the words, watching her the while:

"Some day I'll find you,
Moonlight behind you,
True to the dream that we're dreaming.
As I draw near you you smile a little smile,
For a little while
We shall stand
Hand in hand . . ."

Karey walked to the piano and joined in softly:

"I'll leave you never,
Love you for ever,
All our past sorrow redeeming.
Try to make it true,
Say you love me too,
Some day I'll find you again."

The last notes died away. Dickon turned round on the piano stool and held out his arms. She ran to him, knelt down beside him, and stayed like that for a long time, dumbly, her cheek pressed against his hand; his arm holding her close.

He repeated:

"I'll leave you never, love you for ever . . . oh my sweet . . . my sweet, my most dear!"

VIII

Malaga in the spring.

The sun shone brilliantly over the busy little city. In the wide main streets the cafés were packed, for it was midday, and the business men gathered to take their drinks in long glasses, lazing

under the striped awnings at the little tables, reading their newspapers, or talking noisily, here, there and everywhere.

The avenue of palm-trees was crowded. The rose-gardens were full. A water-cart rattled up and down the street spraying the hot dusty roads, and a crowd of dirty, little brown-faced urchins ran bare-legged after it, screaming at each other in their high-pitched voices. In the market-place the fruit and fish vendors plied their wares. Down at the quay a surging, jostling crowd watched a big Dutch liner anchoring in harbour on a sea that looked like blue glass.

A man and a girl, obviously English—he in grey flannels, and she in a white dress with a big straw hat on a silver-fair head—came out of the British Consulate and walked to a car which was waiting for them. The driver, from one of the smartest garages in Malaga, touched his cap and showed his white teeth in a smile.

"Buenos!"

Dickon and Karey looked at each other. And then Karey looked at the ring which had, a few moments ago, been slipped on her finger.

"I can't believe it!" she said.

"That you're married to me?" said Dickon. "Well, you are."

"I hope so, darling, because I have every intention of living with you for the rest of my life."

"It's all signed and sealed, my sweet. The question is, now, where do you want to go?"

She looked up at the blue sky, shut her eyes a moment, and let the sun bathe her face—a face that had grown gloriously brown in the last few months which she had spent here in the South.

"It's such a heavenly day."

"Our wedding day, darling. It couldn't be anything but heavenly. Where do you want to go?"

"Straight back to Santa Clara, I think."

"It wouldn't be a bad idea. Will there be room for me in your flat."

Her eyes danced at him.

"It doesn't sound proper. Let's call it *our* flat now."

"Well, then, is there room in *our* flat?"

"I think so, darling. I told Pura that I was expecting the *Señor* to-day."

"And did you tell her that it wasn't the same *Señor* as—last time?"

Karey nodded gravely.

"Yes—they all know that. I think they're a little shocked. But

I'm much too happy to worry. And anyhow, I had a cable from Ralph this morning, and he and Olive are being married out in Sydney. He wished me luck and said how happy he was. But he couldn't be as happy as we are."

"Jump in the car, darling."

When they were driving through Malaga, her left hand locked in his, Dickon looked at Karey and shook his head once or twice as though in amazement.

"My wife! Incredible!"

"But you aren't sorry?"

"Sorry, my God!"

He lifted the hand and carried it to his lips.

"Don't ask me questions like that, sweet. I'm not responsible for my actions to-day. And the roof of the damn car's open. I've got to behave."

She gave a delighted little laugh. They were held up for a moment in the traffic. A small dirty boy on crutches with those velvety, beautiful eyes which are common to so many Spanish children limped up to the car. He held out a claw like hand, whining and grimacing at them.

Dickon put his hand in his pocket and drew out a few loose coins.

"Poor little devil—here you are."

The child grabbed the coins.

"*Gracias, Señor. Muchísimas gracias.*"

Karey watched with shining eyes. She was glad that Dickon had done that. It was impossible for her not to remember how disappointed she had been on that day when she and Ralph had first come to Spain and he had turned the beggars away. It was foolish, he had said, to start throwing *largesse* at beggars in this country which reeked of them. But there were times when one wanted to be generous to the whole world and this was one of them.

She and Dickon were alike. They thought alike. They were perfectly matched and she knew it.

They drove down the dusty, white, familiar road with the brilliant blue of the sea on one side of them and the savage beautiful mountains on the other. They passed few other cars, but many donkeys, a herd of goats, and the little noisy bus which came rattling by on its way from Gibraltar.

And so at last they came to Santa Clara, where the geraniums were flowering again, scarlet and gay against the white walls; where the wistaria was just breaking, hanging like great exotic

bunches of grapes from the arbour roof; where the roses were in full bloom and the gardeners busy at their old job of cutting carnations for the market.

They did not go to the flat which had been Karey's a year ago, when she had been married to Ralph. She had another one this Spring, closer to the terrace and with a wonderful little window from which one could look sheer down to the rocks and the sea. An artist had lived here and amused himself by painting the white walls of the sitting-room. His vivid, bold strokes of the brush had left a picture of Paris, of a crazy lamp-post and a tree and a tall house in a street which must be Montmartre. The result was picturesque and amusing.

Pura, thrilled that her young *Señora* of a year ago was coming back newly married, had filled the little sitting-room with flowers. Everywhere there stood bowls and vases filled with blue and pink and purple blossoms. It seemed to Karey a fitting reception for a bride.

She put her bag and hat down on the table and turned to Dickon. He was watching her contentedly, smoking a cigarette.

She remembered how she had loved this place when she had first come here, but how several things had been missing—things that were now here. Absolute love—perfect companionship. Her heart seemed too full for speech. She could only return the gaze of this man who was now her husband and wonder that it was possible for anybody to be so happy in this world.

To-night there would be a wonderful sunset; then the stars and moonlight—a full moon which would make a pool of silver in the sea. And then there would be the perfection of the dawn, the swifts circling round the Cuartel; the Spaniard with his little grey donkey and the oranges; all the long, sunny lazy day before them. Their honeymoon—and this time a real honeymoon which could not end even when they had to leave Spain, once their holiday was over.

"What are you thinking of, sweet?" Dickon asked her.

"Just how wonderful it all is, Dickon."

He took her in his arms and pushed a fair thick wave of hair back from her face. It did his heart good to see how well the hollows in her cheeks and throat had filled out, and how brown and fit and happy she was looking.

"We are lucky, my darling. There aren't many people to whom such gifts as these are given."

"I know that, Dickon," she said.

"It's worth all the unhappiness that we've both been through."

"Absolutely worth it."

"Come out into the sunshine, my sweet. Let's walk down the terrace to that arbour where I first took you in my arms. I thought that night that you could never possibly belong to me. I want to go there now and thank God that you do."

She nodded and put her hand through his arm, pressing it close to her side.

They walked out of the flower-filled flat down the stone staircase under a blaze of sunlight, and into the Cuartel.

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When Karey's fiancé was killed on the eve of their wedding, her world seemed to come to an abrupt end. Some months later she agreed to become the wife of Dr Ralph Chesney. This seemed a commonsense marriage to a man who loved her, but Karey knew that for her love would always be just a sad memory. But soon after the wedding, Karey found herself irresistibly drawn to Dickon Farringham, her dead fiancé's double. And then she had to face up to an agonizing choice between her duty to a husband she could never love and her passion for a man she loved too well.

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